

# 2dartist

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127

Issue 127 | July 2016

## Generate creature custom brushes

Create a story-driven  
creature illustration with  
custom brushes

## plus

Eclectic architectural sketches

**Design a sci-fi prison vehicle**

Paint an organic alien city

**Darkly surreal illustrations**

Speed painting an eastern dragon  
**and much more!**

# Editor's Letter



**ANNIE MOSS**  
Junior Editor









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Instagram!**

## Welcome to 2dartist issue 127!

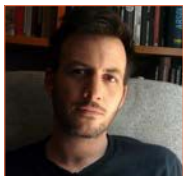
This month's issue features interviews with Patricio Clarey, who discusses his darkly surreal illustrations, and a showcase of Helen Norcott's 'Sketch a day' personal challenge. We also take a look at the intricate and detailed sketchbook of illustrator Rajkumar Ramalingam.

Along with plenty of creative inspiration, we have detailed tutorials from Alejandro Olmedo, who shows how to speed paint an eastern dragon, and Nick Foreman's guide to designing a sci-fi prison vehicle. Florent Llamas demonstrates how to create an organic alien city, Rudy Siswento generates custom brushes for painting a story-lead creature illustration, and José Julián Londoño Calle shows how he builds sci-fi environments!

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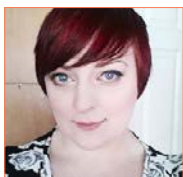
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## Contributors



### PATRICIO CLAREY

Patricio Clarey was born in Argentina and now lives in Barcelona, Spain, with his wife. He currently works as a freelance CG artist in a few different areas including comic books, concept art, and character design.



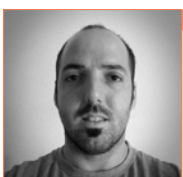
### HELEN NORCOTT

Helen Norcott is a freelance concept artist working on building her portfolio by doing daily speed paintings. She hopes to land a job in the videogame industry as an environment concept artist.



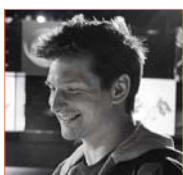
### RAJKUMAR RAMALINGAM

Rajkumar Ramalingam is an architect by trade. He has a passion for concept design and is currently studying for his Masters in Themed Entertainment Design at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Georgia, USA.



### ALEJANDRO OLMEDO

Alejandro Olmedo is a concept designer and illustrator based in Malaga, Spain. He is currently working freelance doing fantasy and sci-fi cover art, concepts and speed painting tutorials.



### NICK FOREMAN

Nick Foreman is a concept artist based in the UK. Freelance since 2001, Nick specializes in mechanical and environment design, but enjoys pushing himself out of his comfort zone.



### FLORENT LLAMAS

Florent Llamas is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Nîmes, France. His works include impressive sci-fi landscape scenes and dramatic action shots for the games industry.



### RUDY SISWANTO

Rudy Siswanto is an illustrator and concept artist from Surabaya, Indonesia. He is known for his detailed fantastical creature illustrations and has created artworks for books and games.



### JOSÉ JULIÁN LONDOÑO CALLE

José Julián Londoño Calle is a graphic designer, concept artist and matte painter. He's worked as a university lecturer in Design for the last seven years, and a mentor for the Facet Visual Effects School, Mexico.



### GEDIMINAS PRANCKEVICIUS

Gediminas Pranckevicius is a freelance creative illustrator, working and living in Vilnius, Lithuania. He studied at Vilnius Academy of Arts. His work includes picture book illustration, cover illustrations, and character design.



### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO 2DARTIST?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: [annie@3dtotal.com](mailto:annie@3dtotal.com).



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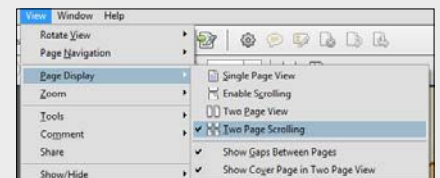
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1. Open the magazine in Reader;
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## Jump to articles

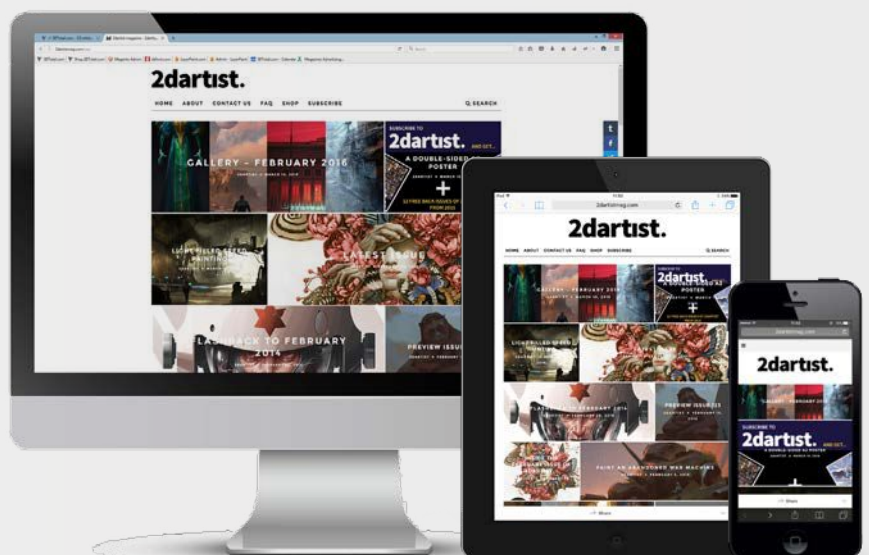
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## The Artist



**Patricio Clarey**  
patricioclarey.com

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Patricio Clarey was born in Argentina and now lives in Barcelona, Spain with his wife. He currently works as a freelance CG artist in a few different areas including comic books, concept art, and characters design.

# Darkly surreal illustrations

Patricio Clarey, freelance CG artist and illustrator, showcases pages from his dark graphic novels and otherworldly work ▶



For the last six years freelance illustrator Patricio Clarey has worked on a variety of projects which include character design, concept art and publishing three of his own graphic novels.

He finds inspiration in all areas of art and is excited by the potential material that exists out in the world. When he got his first computer, Patricio swapped traditional brushes for digital tools; this gave him the freedom to fully explore concepts and experiment with different styles.

Patricio speaks to 2dartist about his career, motivation, and future plans. He constantly strives to improve and learn new techniques so that his work doesn't become becoming stagnated. Some of Patricio's work touches on difficult themes and invites you to think about things such as political corruption and war. Patricio also shares his advice for keeping yourself motivated and keeping your work up-to-date and fresh...

**2dartist:** Hi Patricio, thanks for talking to 2dartist! Could you start by introducing yourself a bit to the readers? ►

**Patricio Clarey:** Thank you! I'm a big fan of 2dartist! I'm a CG artist and for the last six years I have worked as an illustrator, mainly on comic books, concept art, character design and covers. The highlight of my career has to be working on my own projects, that is as difficult as getting a good job.

I have been involved in the world of graphic novels for quite a few years, and along with the writer Lara

Fuentes, we have managed to publish two graphic novels here in Spain, and one on Amazon. We are currently distancing ourselves from comic books for a while to explore other areas, but we hope to return one day, stronger and ready to create fresh sequential art.

**2da:** You have a background in fine art, how has this influenced your digital work?

## 🕒 Artist Timeline Patricio's career so far

**2002:** Moved from his native country to advance his artistic career

**2004:** Worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for a magazine

**2007:** Met his wife and together they started work on their first graphic novel *Archaeologists of Shadows*

**2011:** Published the second graphic novel *15M Voces de una Revolución* with his wife

**2012:** First Exposé of his artwork

**2014:** Published the third graphic novel *La Sombra de Don Quijote* in Spain

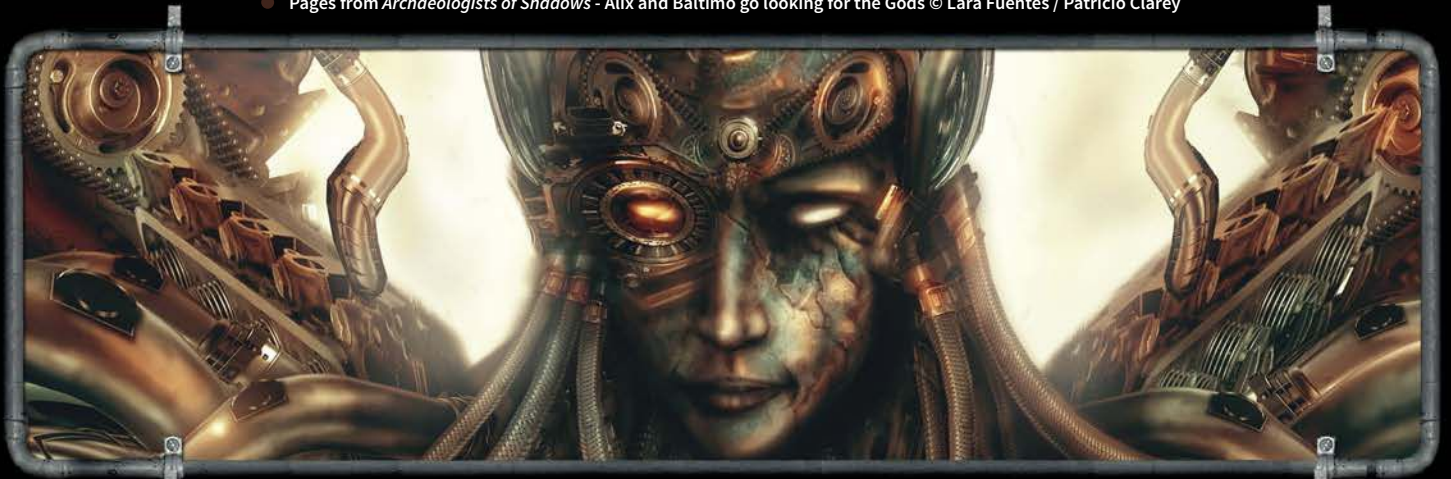
**2015:** Took a two month break from work to create a new series of illustrations

**2016:** Started work on the next graphic novel

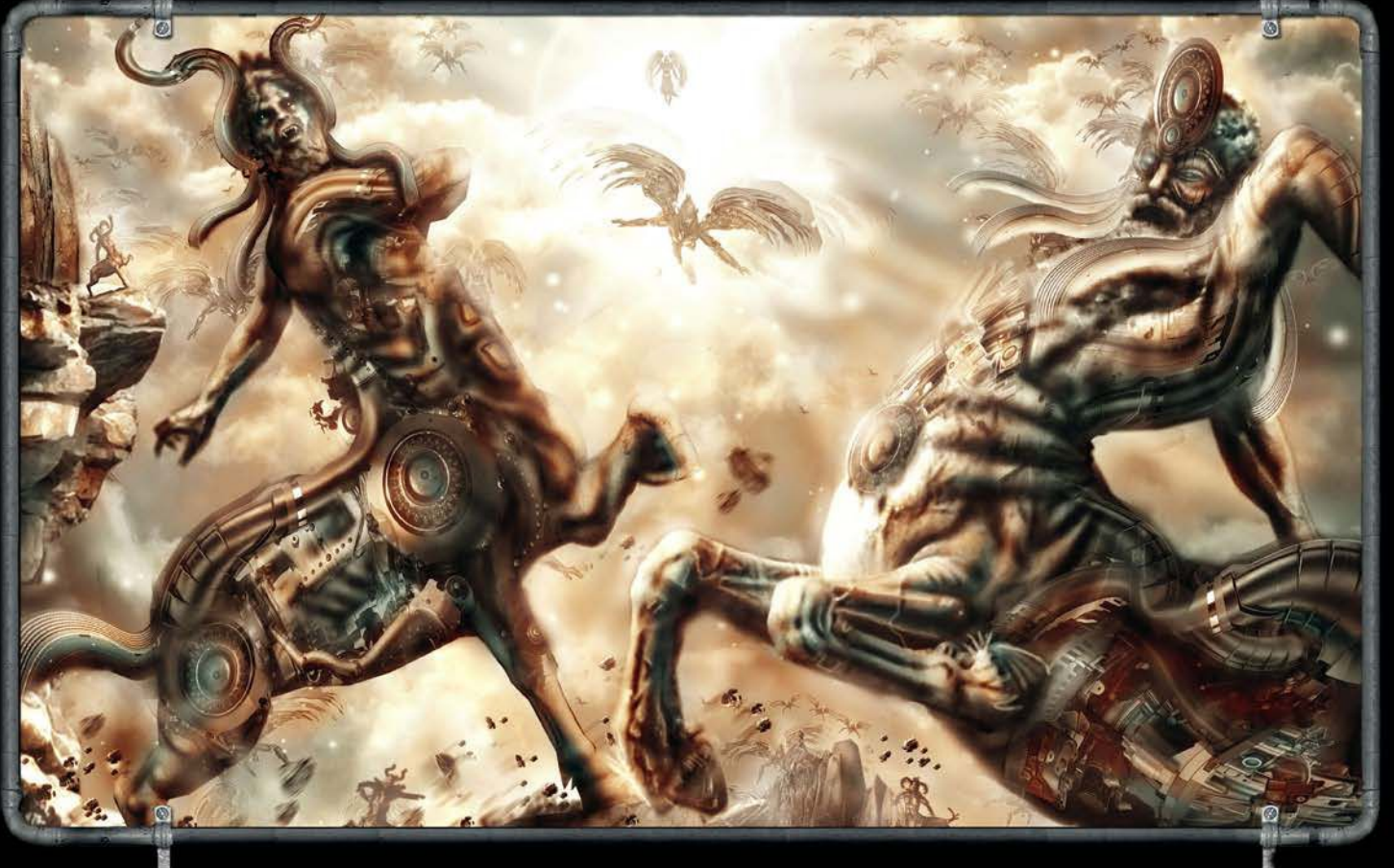
• Pages from *15M Voces de una Revolución* - a graphic novel about political corruption © Panini Comics Spain







"THE WONDERS OF CREATION"





"THEY SHALL BE THE  
REFLECTION OF THE OTHERS."

"THEY SHALL BE THE  
OTHERS' INTERPRETATION."

"AND SO THEIR JOURNEY  
MUST BEGIN WITH A REVELATION"





For this piece Patricio started with pencils  
then ink and added colors in Photoshop  
© Patricio Clarey



PATRICIO  
CLAREY



**“For me it is the start of each project that is the most creative, magical, and memorable; this is where the mind has the freedom to explore concepts that can be molded to fit our theme”**

**PC:** My traditional studies, which make up the body of my learning and understanding of the art world, have greatly influenced my digital art. I got my first computer when I was eighteen and I started using Photoshop with a mouse! My first big venture into the digital world was my graphic novel *Archeologists of Shadows*, none of which was drawn by hand. I made articulated sculptures of the characters and models of locations, photographed them and then merged everything together in Photoshop. Working this way gave me the freedom to experiment and mix styles that only the digital environment can offer.

**2da:** You have produced work for several graphic novels. What do you enjoy about this genre?

**PC:** For me it is the start of each project that is the most creative, magical, and memorable; this is where the mind has the freedom to explore concepts that can be molded to fit our theme. However, you have to keep up that enthusiasm for years, trying not to become exhausted, especially when the work itself can be very time consuming. I find it very interesting to have the responsibility of creating the visual aspect of a story, and find that every moment brings something more to the continuity of the characters. In some symbolic way you stop being just an illustrator and take on other roles such as a cinematographer, costume designer, and director, not to mention knowing how to choose the right graphic style for each story. Creating graphic novels is very hard work, you become completely absorbed and it tests all your faculties. You can easily devote all your time to this intense work and I admire those artists who turn a comic book into a work of art.

**2da:** Where do you find inspiration for your work? Which other artists do you particularly admire?

**PC:** Art in general has always been a rich source of inspiration for me; there is enough material out there with the potential to create a career if you're disciplined. However, the existence of different branches of art does not mean that everyone will draw better; there is a big niche to fill, which is also exciting. Somehow in the end, the inspiration always comes from the desire to improve ourselves, explore and master as many branches of art as we possibly can. Before attempting to make an awe-inspiring image, you must have a very strong desire to do it well, to accept failure, and go back and try as many times as necessary until you get it right.

## Patricio's significant artwork

This image is special to me because it was one of the first to open the way to an area I was looking to explore. At some point in 2014 I realized that the majority of my portfolio was too dark and I was focused mainly on comic books and concept art. This led to me making a change and looking for another kind of image. This image gave me a hint of those changes; however the color theme was still not resolved. Finally in mid-2015 I started working on a new series of illustrations that met the desired renewed intention.



Some of my very favorite artists are; Fengua Zhong, Ruan Jia, James Jean, Ashley Wood, JungGi Kim, Marko Djurdjevic, Sergey Kolesov, Dave Rapoza, Aleks Briclot, and many more.

**2da:** What are your preferred tools to work with generally? Are there any tools you find yourself using again and again?

**PC:** When I work traditionally anything goes including pencils, ink, markers, acrylic and so on. In Photoshop I occasionally change brushes, I am always checking out what's available but I usually return to old habits. I'm working on creating

illustrations in a different style to my previous works; this helps me look for alternatives that will benefit the image. I have bought different tips for my Wacom graphic pen, it was a great decision and I highly recommend it.

**2da:** Which tools and software would you like to learn in the future?

**PC:** I use Photoshop all the time, but I also love using other programs such as ZBrush and Maya, however I cannot use them properly. There was a time when I seriously considered using 3D in my work but in the end I went with 2D and painting. I feel that I am closer ►





● The System - a personal piece © Patricio Clarey



to the painting, in the near future I see myself going back to using real brushes and painting on canvases. However, I still have a long way to go working with Photoshop and digital brushes; I want to see how I can be relevant in the digital world before I jump back to the canvas.

**2da:** How have you adapted and developed your skills over the course of your career?

**PC:** I think the Wacom Cintiq 24 has allowed me to finally adapt to the digital format and from there I could focus on improving and painting in a better way. I also think another important reason might be that a few times I really liked my own work and I am able to recognize when something I made was good or bad. I always think that there is a better version that I cannot reach, whether this is for lack of talent, experience, or circumstances. This has led me to constantly update and renew myself, to keep looking for a better way of doing things.

**2da:** What do you most enjoy about working on a new project?

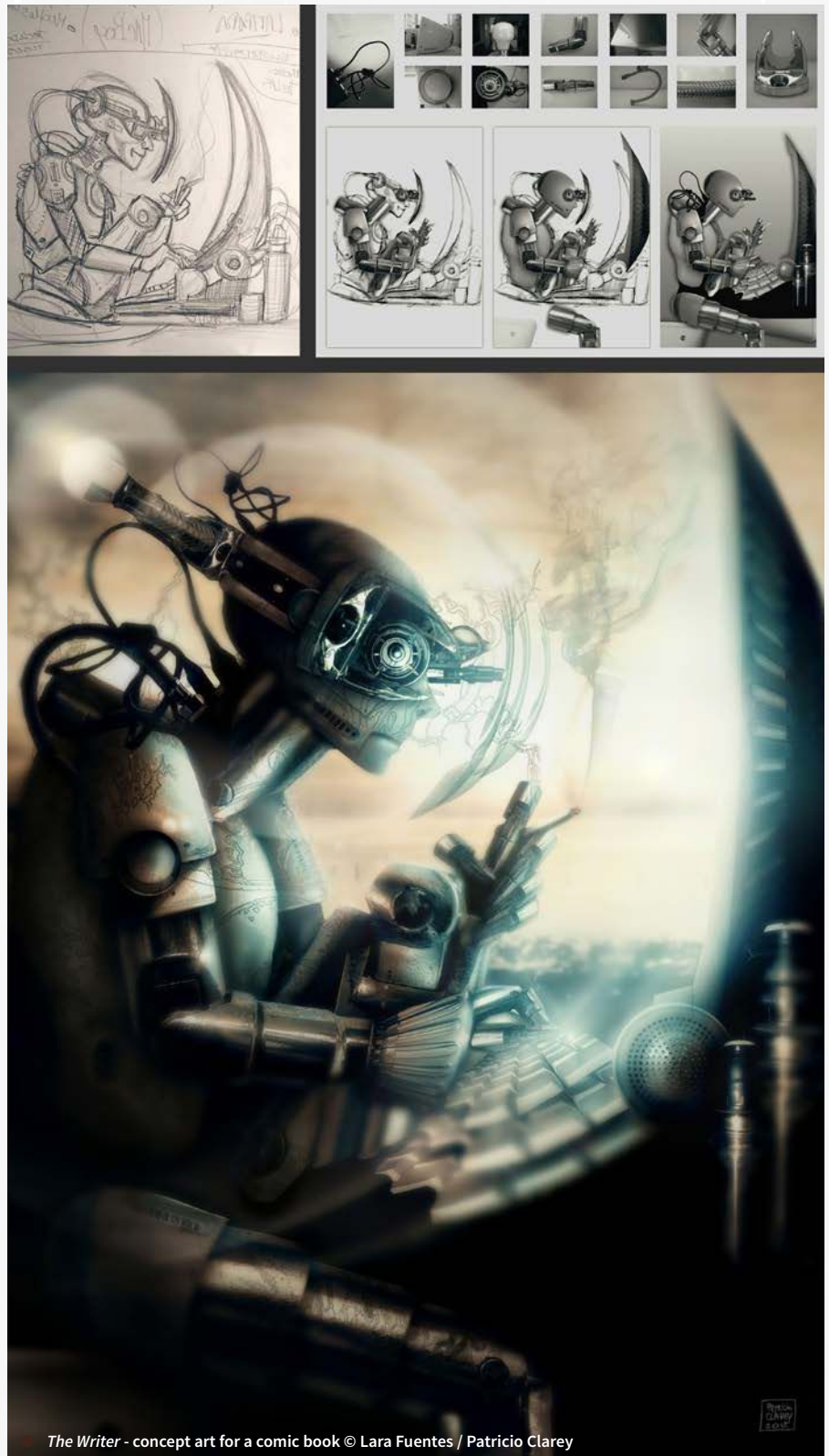
**PC:** Almost everything! For me the beginning of a new project is always an overwhelming output of creativity; it is the most difficult part but not the hardest because you have to create something from scratch. I think every project develops in the same way that a person does: it is born, it grows strong and finally it dies because the work is finished. However, the main difference is that through creating great work it can lead to immortality! In the first steps of every project you have a renewed energy that seems to fit like a glove.

**2da:** Are there any other areas in the art world that you'd like to branch into and why?

**PC:** I have a great admiration for the art expression, and the many paths available and I love almost all of them. But it interests me to put it all together and interweave, and the clearest example I've had has been our first graphic novel with that experimental style. I would like to re-create models and characters, but run it in the right way in order to show the true potential of that style, which is huge, although it is almost impossible, but is a desire to which I have not yet resigned.

**2da:** What initial steps do you take when you are first given a brief for a new project? Do you dive straight into the sketching process, or do you have a more analytical approach?

**PC:** I usually analyze the material until I feel comfortable with that concept and then start doing some sketches. Market diversity is incalculable, each client is always looking for something different, often ►



*The Writer* - concept art for a comic book © Lara Fuentes / Patricio Clarey


## If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out as an artist, what advice would you give?

In a letter to my young self, I would say something along the lines of; "For all the millions of questions in your head the answer is always the same – you are not innately talented, so you must work harder than you think, but if you do then you will achieve and win the game. Because at the end of life you must know that you get it all, and that's the only way you become an artist."









THEN YOU  
KNOW THAT ONLY  
THE TRUE ALTER EGOS  
COULD HAVE CREATED  
LIFE FROM  
NOTHING.

BEHOLD OUR  
CREATION,  
SERVANT, AND  
KNEEL IN FRONT  
OF THE TRUE GODS  
ON EARTH.







This one is one of the first images Patricio made this year © Patricio Clarey

something you might never have imagined, and we must be prepared for that.

**2da:** Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

**PC:** However sad it may sound, the motivation for commissioned work is the money and the deadline. It is also great motivation when you bring something extra to the project because there are more coincidences than creative differences, which allows you to perform a task. In my case I have had very different jobs and each one has had a different motivation; when you are working on a great project with responsible people, keeping motivated becomes a responsibility and is great to work towards.

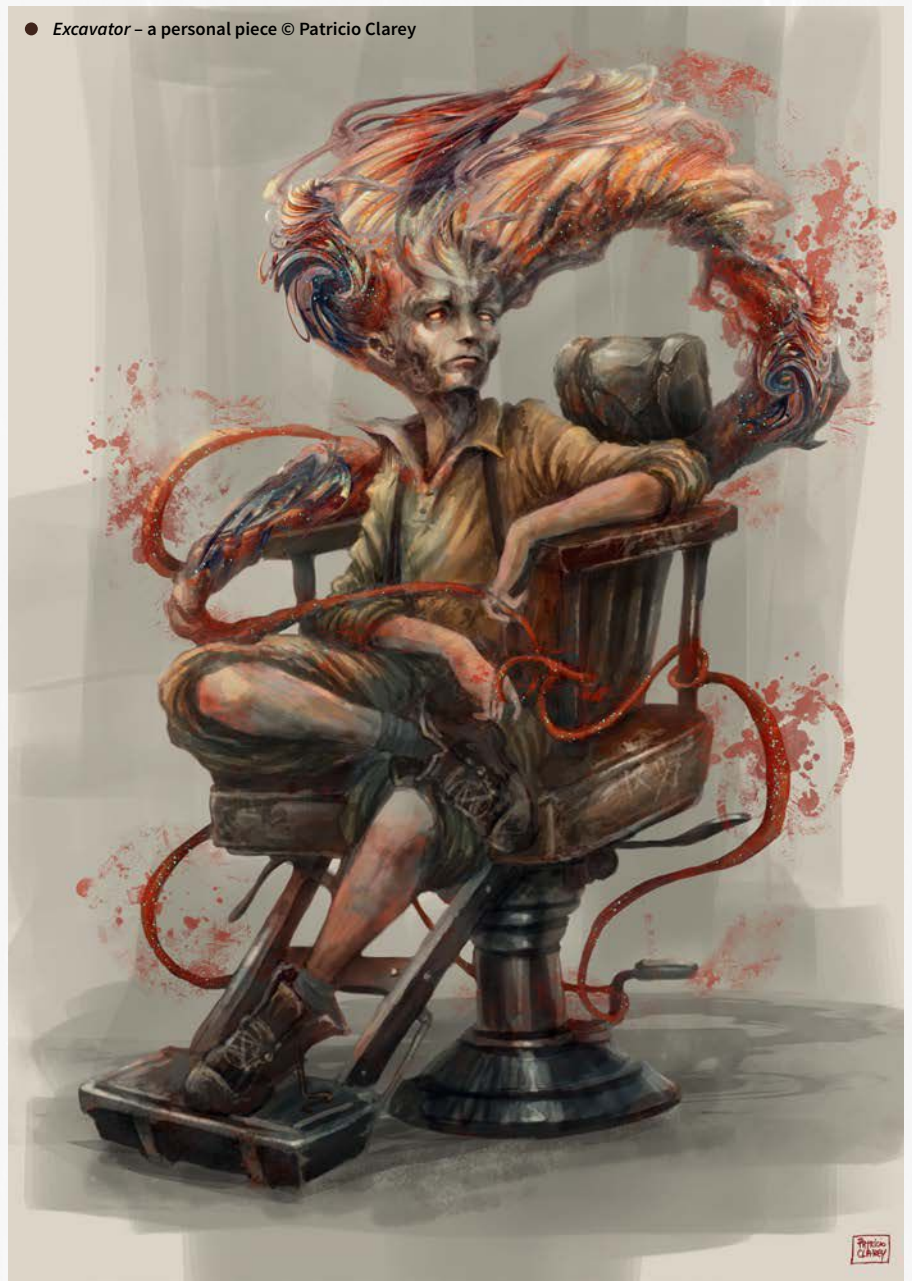
Other than that my main motivation is knowing that the work I'm doing has a time limit, that it has an end, and that it will allow me to advance in my chosen field. The jobs might be temporary but the personal art is forever.

**2da:** Can you tell us anything about the projects you are working on at the moment?

**PC:** A short while ago I was working on designing twenty five characters for an RPG. Right now I am working on design and character illustrations for card games.

For almost a year I have been working on a new series of personal illustrations, they are quite different from my previous stuff (which was very

● *Excavator* – a personal piece © Patricio Clarey





dark) and I feel very comfortable working in this new style. It allows me to concentrate on one image and explore things on a shorter timescale, which is very different to making graphic novels. Once I have enough illustrations I will make an art book.

I'm also working on a new personal graphic novel that will have six issues, each with twenty two pages but so far I only have twelve pages of this huge project; it will take a lot of patience to finish it.

**2da:** When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

**PC:** I ride a bike and walk a lot because it isn't healthy to spend lots of time sitting down! This is a crucial and difficult area for me because when I'm not working to earn money to live, I should be working on my own projects. So there isn't much time left over and I try to use it to digest what I'm doing and the direction I'm going. It was very important to take a big break after publishing our third graphic novel, to take time to reflect and look at everything from a different point of view.

When I look back at a project, I tend to think of the many things I've wanted to do and have done but the results are not always what I wanted. This has created the need to reinvent my art, to improve and update myself, or to branch out and test myself in other styles to keep on sowing possibilities and see what happens.

**2da:** And finally, what should we look out for from you in the future?

**PC:** I hope to finish (and hopefully publish) my art book in the next year. Also, my wife and I will continue trying to get our first trilogy, *Archeologists of Shadows*, printed together in one tome – but it's a 200 page graphic novel with a 150 page making of. If we can't get a publisher then we will try to get a few copies made with the help of crowdfunding. ●

**Thank you Patricio for talking to 2dartist!**



● *Urban King* – a personal piece experimenting with painterly textures © Patricio Clarey

### What do you think has been most influential to your career success?

I'm two or three galaxies away from success, but I think the biggest influence has been to know that I will never deviate from this path. You can get lost in the maze of art for a while, but any route eventually leads to your destination.

### Is there anything you think budding artists should try to avoid?

Avoid the world and create a new and better one.



“These tutorials not only provide interesting exercises for the beginner to help build a strong foundation for drawing and painting, but also provide important insights into the mindset of a concept artist. Very useful and inspiring!”

**Lois Van Baarle** (aka Loish)

Digital concept artist & animator | [loish.net](http://loish.net)

# beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop® characters

Following on from the highly successful *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop*, this latest title explores the popular techniques used in character design.

*Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting: Characters* is a comprehensive guide for artists wishing to create convincing and detailed characters. It features established artists such as Charlie Bowater (concept artist at Atomhawk) and Derek Stenning (freelance concept artist and illustrator, with clients including Marvel Entertainment and Nintendo) who share their industry experiences by covering such aspects as posing characters, choosing the correct costumes, conveying emotions, and creating suitable moods.

Comprehensive step-by-step instructions – plus a quick tips section demonstrating how to paint elements that are integral to character design and a glossary covering essential Photoshop tools – make this an invaluable resource for those looking to learn new skills, as well as those pursuing the next level.



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# beginner's guide to sketching

characters, creatures & concepts

Embark on a sketching journey with the inspirational Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts.

From gesture drawing and finding simple shapes to mastering line quality and shading, Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts is a fantastic companion that will teach you to sketch confidently while helping you improve the way you design. Your journey will begin with a look at drawing materials and techniques, before moving on to essential warm-up exercises to help you become familiar with the fundamental basics. Four master projects by seasoned professional artists will then take you from concept to final illustration, walking you step by step through poses, designs, and costumes before culminating in a final scene. Featured artists include Justin Gerard, Brun Croes, and Sylwia Bomba.







# Atmospheric environmental concepts

Freelance concept artist Helen Norcott shares her yearlong challenge to do a speed painting a day [▶](#)



## The Artist



**Helen Norcott**

[artstation.com/artist/skraww](http://artstation.com/artist/skraww)

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Helen Norcott is a freelance concept artist working on building her portfolio by doing daily speed paintings. She hopes to land a job in the videogame industry as an environment concept artist.



Freelance concept artist, Helen Norcott, began her artistic journey at a very young age; she's been drawing for as long as she's been able to hold a pencil, although she has swapped drawing cute animals for creating expansive environment concepts. When Helen began her studies she used more traditional media but now she is focused on honing her digital skills. She discusses her passions and dreams of becoming a concept artist for videogames.

This month we speak to Helen about her yearlong challenge to create a new speed painting every day and how it has reinvigorated her motivation. As an artist who specializes in environmental concepts, Helen draws inspiration from nature and enjoys capturing the beauty of the places she'd like to one day visit. She also shares how by stripping back her Photoshop brushes she freed up her creativity...

**2dartist:** Hi Helen, thanks for talking to *2dartist*! Could you start by introducing yourself a bit to the readers?

**Helen Norcott:** Right now I'm working as a freelance concept artist; however, I also do a little illustration and graphic design when the opportunity arises. I've been doing art for as long as I've been able to hold a pencil, I thoroughly enjoyed drawing as one of my childhood hobbies (back then I preferred to draw animals and dresses, rather than environments!)

I used to illustrate my own short stories as a teen and eventually I progressed through Art College and University. This gave me traditional art skills but I soon made the move to digital, due to my love of technology and my discovery of Photoshop. My passion for videogames has given rise to a big interest in environment design; I would love to work full-time as a concept artist in the future.

**2da:** Your works often explore wide, open landscapes, atmospheric color and lighting, and sometimes a solitary figure. What do you find most fascinating about these barely inhabited spaces?

**HN:** The locations I paint are places I wish I could visit. I want to show huge expansive environments, I like to include a solitary figure – not only for scale but also as if they are viewing the scene for the first time.

**2da:** Where do you look for inspiration? Are there any other artists you particularly admire?

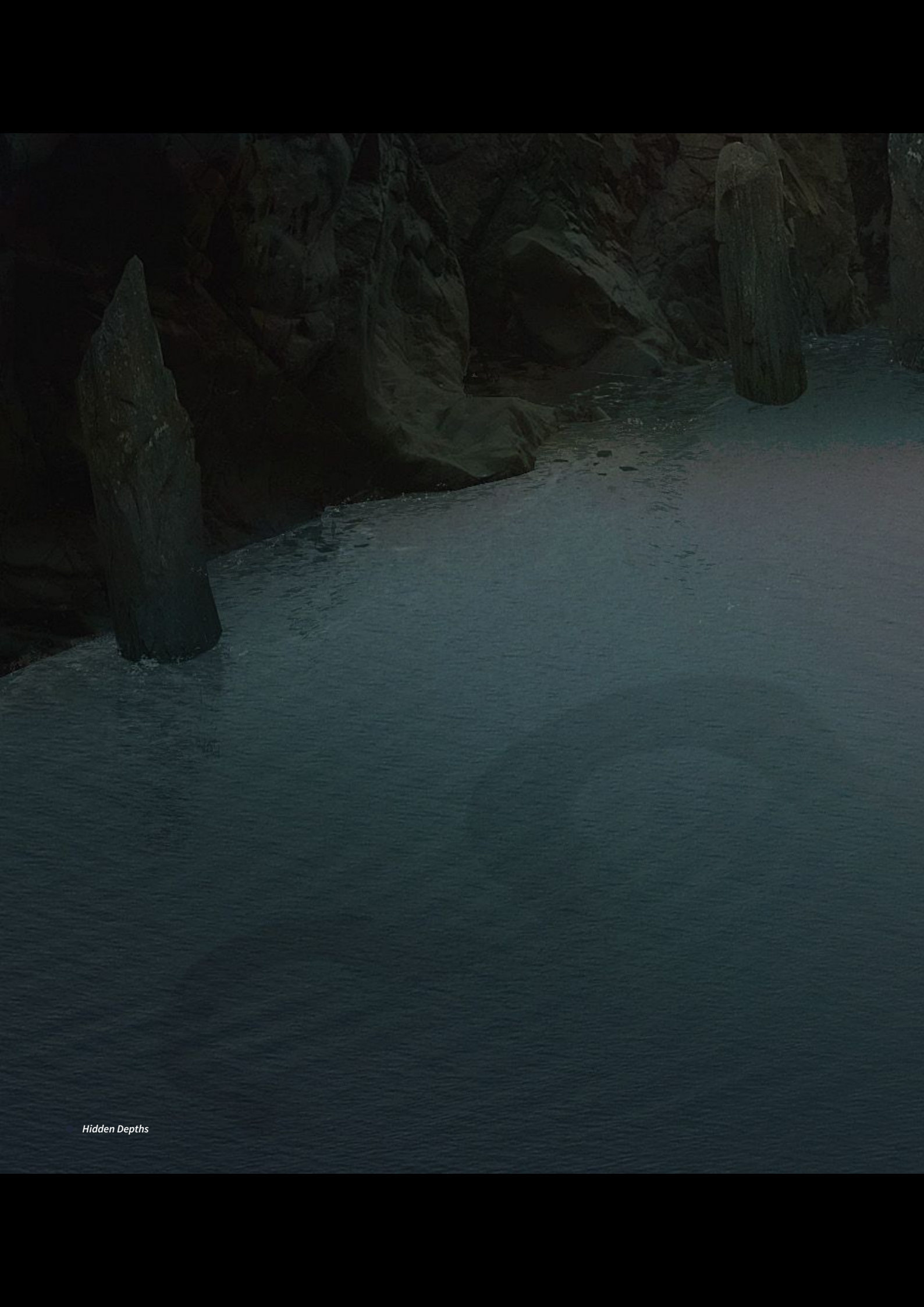
**HN:** Nature; as an environment artist I try to capture the beauty of nature but often with a fantasy twist. I enjoy reading and playing videogames so they play a huge part in the scenes I paint. I try to think how I would illustrate the scene while describing the setting to myself. I follow a lot of artists and browse a lot of art online. There are so many great artists ►











*Hidden Depths*







to follow but I really have a soft spot for the works of Eytan Zana, Raphael Lacoste, Jeremy Paillotin, Shaddy Safadi, Nicolas Bouvier (aka Sparth), and last but not least Thomas Scholes. I hope that one day all of my practice will help me to produce work that can be shown side by side with their works.

**2da:** If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

**HN:** I honestly wouldn't ask them anything, I would rather watch them work. I think I learn more watching, such as seeing how to use a particular brush or what resources to use. It would be great to see the traditional masters at work, although, I think

watching concept artists working on a videogame project would teach so much and be more useful for my future career.

**2da:** What are your preferred tools to work with generally? Are there any brushes you find yourself using again and again?

**HN:** My go-to tool is Photoshop, as I'm sure it is for many artists out there. I work with a limited brush pack, as well as some additions and recommendations made by other artists. I really like a number of brushes created by Jeremy Paillotin and Shaddy Safadi. I also use a number of custom shapes inspired by Sparth's techniques for blocking in

shapes quickly. A good set of simple reliable brushes can work wonders. As well as Photoshop I also use PaintTool SAI for my illustrations, its brush to vector line art feature is very useful and I like the soft and "brushy" feel the software gives paintings.

**2da:** Which hardware do you use? Are there any you would like to utilize in the future?

**HN:** I currently use a small Wacom Intuos Tablet with Photoshop and PaintTool SAI. I sometimes use Adobe Illustrator for my graphic design work and I would like to sharpen those skills a bit more. I have a keen interest in 3D, so if I could learn anything new it would have to be a 3D modeling package.





**“I have learned a lot since starting this project, including how to use a better set of simple brushes and blocking out a scene quickly without getting bogged down by details”**

**2da:** How would you describe your job to a group of aliens, who have no idea what a concept artist is or does?

**HN:** That's a hard one. I bring ideas to life. I imagine a story, or a setting, and I try to make it into a picture that you can see.

**2da:** At the start of the year you set yourself a challenge to produce a piece of art every day. How is the challenge going and what have you learned so far?

**HN:** It's been a challenging start to the year but I'm almost half-way through. When I left work to pursue a freelance career, and create a stronger portfolio two years ago, I found it hard to sit down and make myself paint. Sometimes I would go days or weeks without feeling the inspiration to paint. This year I decided to make my work a New Year's resolution. I didn't want to give up on it, so I think by making my work public it made me stick to my goals.

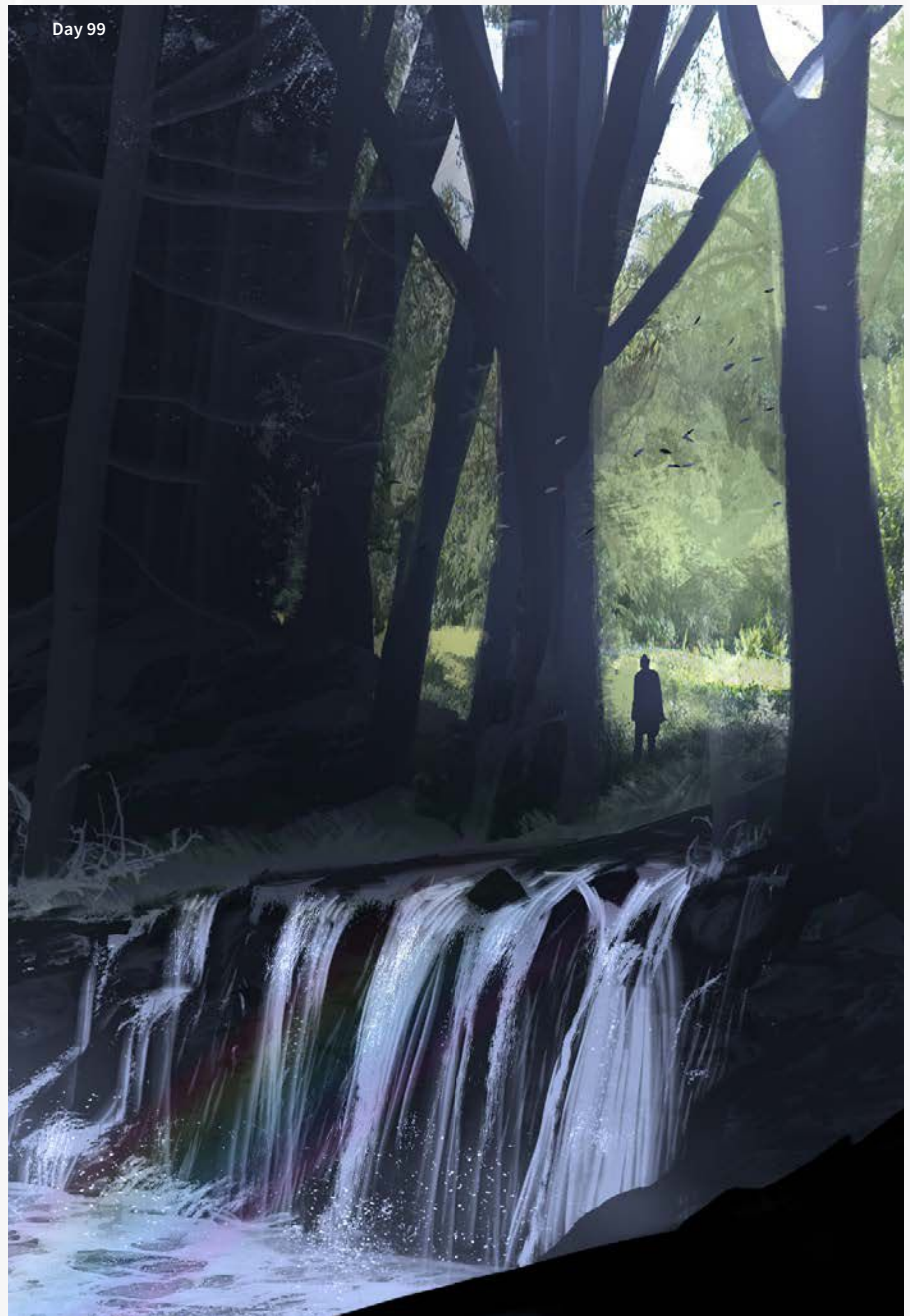
So many people have shared nice comments about my work; it would feel like I was letting them down if I didn't see this through to the end. I have learned a lot since starting this project, including how to use a better set of simple brushes and blocking out a scene quickly without getting bogged down by details. I've also sharpened my composition and thumbnailing skills, something I often avoided in the past. I have come a long way since starting and I hope that one day I will find my place in the videogames industry.

**2da:** What makes a project fun for you?

**HN:** Many things make it fun; getting to try something new inspires me as does working on a great idea. Now when a new idea pops into my head I feel like I want to draw it straight away, which is something that I had lost the motivation for last year.

**2da:** Are there any other areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into and why?

**HN:** I would like to learn more 3D skills. I think being able to use 3D elements in my concept art would be a great help to my workflow but I'd also like to learn it because it's fun to work on, and what little 3D I have done in the past has been both fun and challenging. I would also like to get back into writing because I find ►



## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Don't go straight into the details

Worry about blocking in the main parts of your image first. Get the big shapes on to the canvas and work your way down to the smaller details. If you start putting in fine detail at the beginning it will get lost as you work through a painting. Suggesting texture is much more effective than overdoing it. I also find that it helps to start a painting with the canvas zoomed out and slowly zooming in as I move on to the smaller details.

### Don't be afraid of reference photos

Surround yourself with reference material! If you need to paint a forest, look at some forests for inspiration! Whether you head out into nature with a sketch book, or study some stock photos, it all helps. Then when you come to paint the same sort of scene in the future you have that mental library to draw from. Surround yourself with cool photography and follow great artists to learn from what they have captured.





● *Through the Dark Woods*









writing short stories great fun, which in turn acts as a great source of material for my concept art.

**2da:** What do you find most challenging about working as a concept artist?

**HN:** Coming up with new ideas that look like something no one has seen before can be frustrating and I'm sure many other artists have felt like that at some point. I've really worked hard to improve my technical skills over the course of my daily painting challenge but I want to improve the story telling aspect of my art.

**2da:** Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

**“Often, when I’m drawing, my parakeet Pixel likes to keep me company and occasionally he runs off with my Wacom pen!”**

**HN:** Posting my sketch a day project online has been a big help to me. If I were to give up now I would feel like I'd let down so many people who've followed me since the beginning of this challenge. Receiving detailed feedback is really useful for me on this self improvement project.

**2da:** When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

**HN:** Videogames and reading are a big part of my life. I really don't think you can create art for something you don't already have a passion for. I try to put some free time aside every day to chill out and enjoy new games, new books, and new movies. I find that by surrounding myself with this kind of media pushes my imagination.

I enjoy photography as well; it's very useful to have a huge library of photos to draw inspiration from. I like to make my photos available for download for free, to help other artists. I am also very passionate about animals and birds in particular. Often, when I'm drawing, my parakeet Pixel likes to keep me company and occasionally he runs off with my Wacom pen!





**2da:** And finally, what should we look out for from you in the future?

**HN:** More daily speed paintings! I'm only half way through my challenge so I still have many more paintings to show. I would also like to work on some writing and hopefully share some artwork to accompany it. I'm also looking to work on bigger projects, like more in depth paintings that take hours or even days in comparison to my daily sketches. ●

*Thank you Helen for chatting to 2dartist!*

### **If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out as an artist, what advice would you give?**

I'd tell myself to start practicing environments sooner! I think of all the years I wasted drawing cartoon animals and I cringe! I also think I'd tell myself to stop worrying about what people think and to paint for myself. There was a long period when I wasn't painting – I didn't feel comfortable sharing them online because I never thought I was good enough. If I could tell my pre-university self to get into videogame art sooner, I would. I thoroughly enjoyed my graphic design course at uni, but I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I had specialized in videogame design from the start.

### **Is there anything you think budding artists should try to avoid?**

Don't try to force your artistic style before you have the basics. Learning the basics first will let you find your style naturally. Don't try to make art for other people first, make something *you* like and something *you* feel proud of.

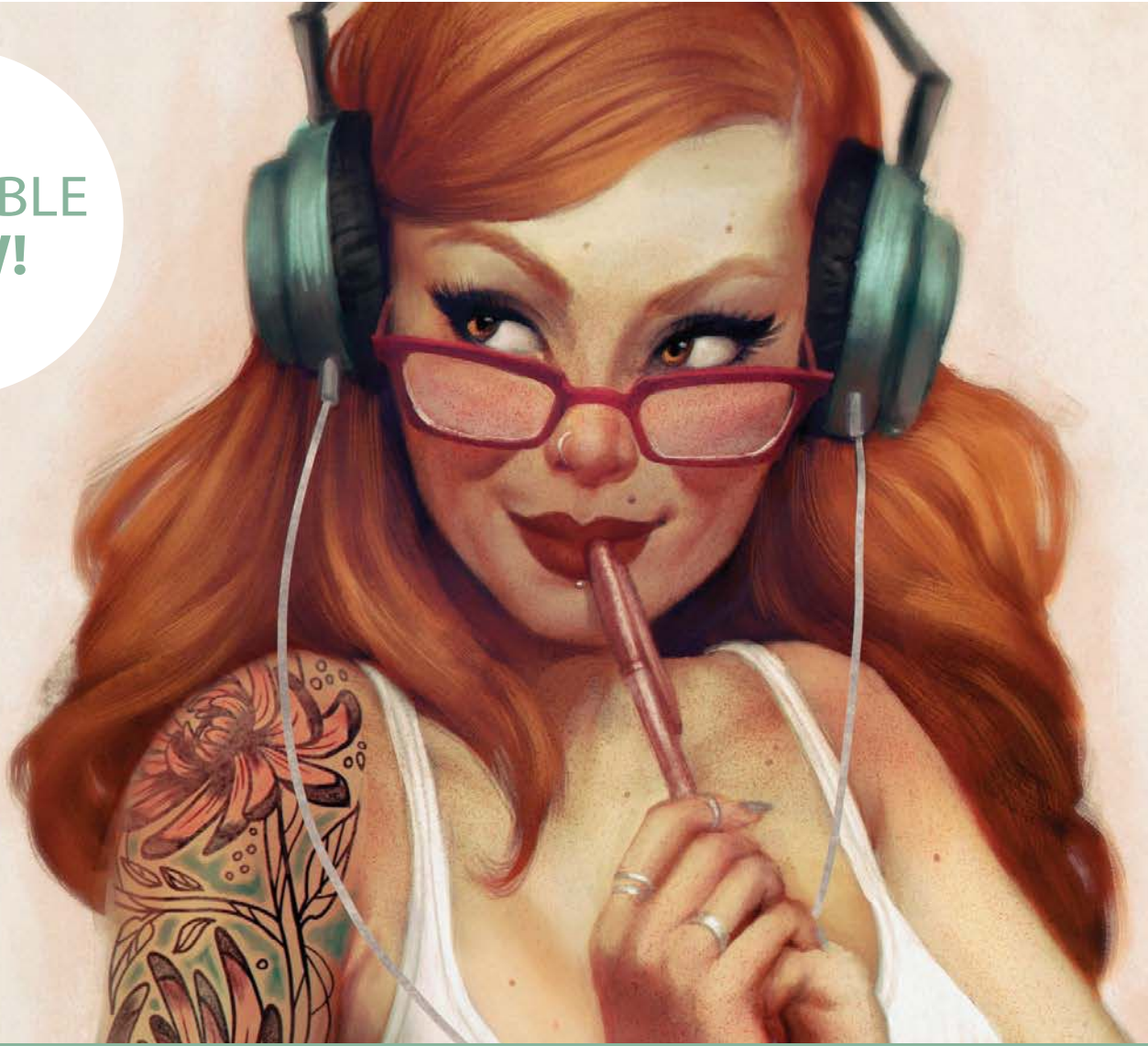
### **What do you think has been most influential to your career success?**

Watching the work of other artists has always inspired me to try harder. Even though I'm only at the beginning of my career, I feel that doing my daily sketches helps me to avoid perfectionism and focus on daily practice.



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RAJKUMAR RAMALINGAM

Sketchbook

Delve into the sketchbook of  
Rajkumar, where fact and fiction mix  
harmoniously together

## The Artist



**Rajkumar  
Ramalingam**

[alenatkach.com](http://alenatkach.com)

Rajkumar Ramalingam is an architect by trade and he comes from a family of architects. His passion is concept design and he gained his experience from working as an architect, assistant professor, illustrator and sketching instructor. He is currently studying for his Masters in Themed Entertainment Design at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Georgia, USA.

All images © Rajkumar Ramalingam



## Explore Rajkumar Ramalingam's intricate and detailed sketches...

I started drawing at a young age; I have always done lots of scribbles of everything I see. Both of my parents and grandfather were very supportive of my passion for art; they encouraged me, along with mentors and professors, to follow my passion. It was during high school that I decided that I could pursue a career as an artist and designer; I was at the age where I was figuring out where my strengths and interests lay.

Sketchbooks are a vital part of my daily life, they can be carried around everywhere I go – they are like extensions of my body that I use to put down everything I see and imagine. I started my art career as an architect; this was quite a tough design process but I think I really began to mature and develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for art when I worked as an assistant professor and sketching instructor in architecture.

I find looking at other artist's work to be a motivator, whenever I see a great piece of work I get a bit competitive and strive to create something better. I think I will always be motivated to draw every day until I die. As an artist I find sketching to be a form of

meditation, I can visualize a better world which can then be applied to the rest of my work in general.

### Inspiration and ideas

I draw my primary inspiration from nature and dreams, the kind that are taken and sculpted into words and sounds, books and music. I am also inspired by some films and games, I think it is better to say that I find inspiration everywhere and in everything. There are several artists that inspire me, first and foremost my father, N. Ramalingam, and grandfather, K. M. Natarajan. I find the work and advice from my mentor Dilip Somesh Kumar and professor John Paul Lowe to be very influential. The artist Manohar Devadoss, who is almost completely blind and has no color perception, is hugely inspirational.

I like to spend some time in art galleries, this helps to remind me that I still have room to

improve my skills and that there is always more to learn. I have a healthy network of creative friends and especially in social forums where fellow artists share their work; I also get involved and try to give good critiques to others. I'm always thinking of ideas and how they can be applied to all things that I come across. Every idea has good and bad sides; to sort through them I spend time brainstorming and balancing the pros and cons of an idea and working out if it will work or not. Sometimes you just have a "feeling" that an idea is really great and will be a success. I get this feeling throughout the whole process from the initial visualization through to the finished piece.

### Materials

My favorite materials to work with are traditional mediums, especially fine liner pens and ink; this is because there is less of a chance for gradient effects when using precise equipment, and you can achieve intense lights and darks. This also ►

## ⚡ PRO TIP

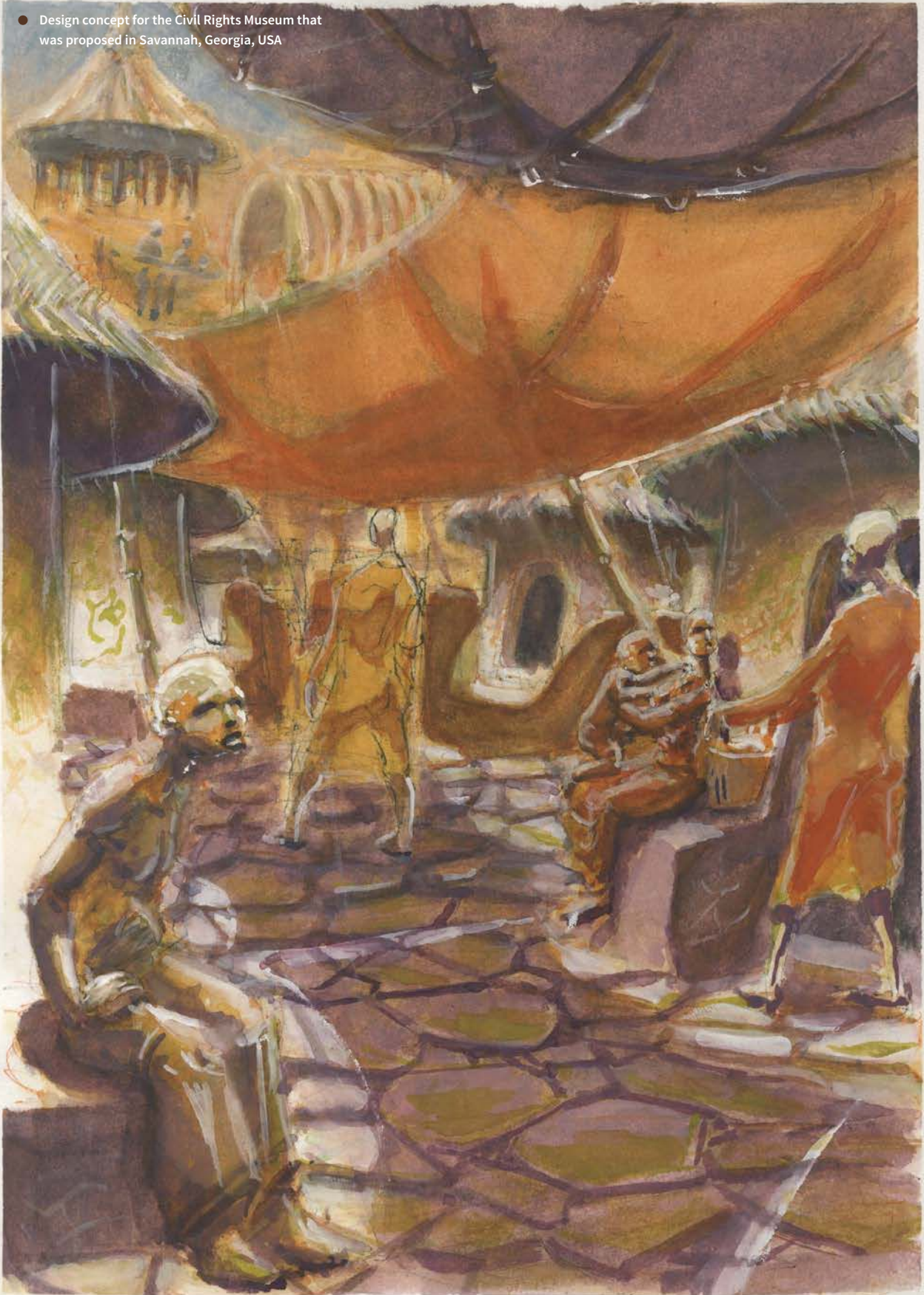
### Design to heal the world

My personal advice is to serve society as much as you can, use your art as a medium to create designs and ideas that respond to social issues. Above all, an artist has the ability to imagine anything and has the ability to find creative solutions to any problem. Share your knowledge with others who wish to learn art, teach them about good habits and the importance of practicing every day; this will be beneficial to both the teacher and student.





- Design concept for the Civil Rights Museum that was proposed in Savannah, Georgia, USA







● *Amma and Magan.* An illustration based on the relationship between the Elephant Lord Vinayagar and his mother



challenges me to control the pen pressure to get the precise values I am aiming for.

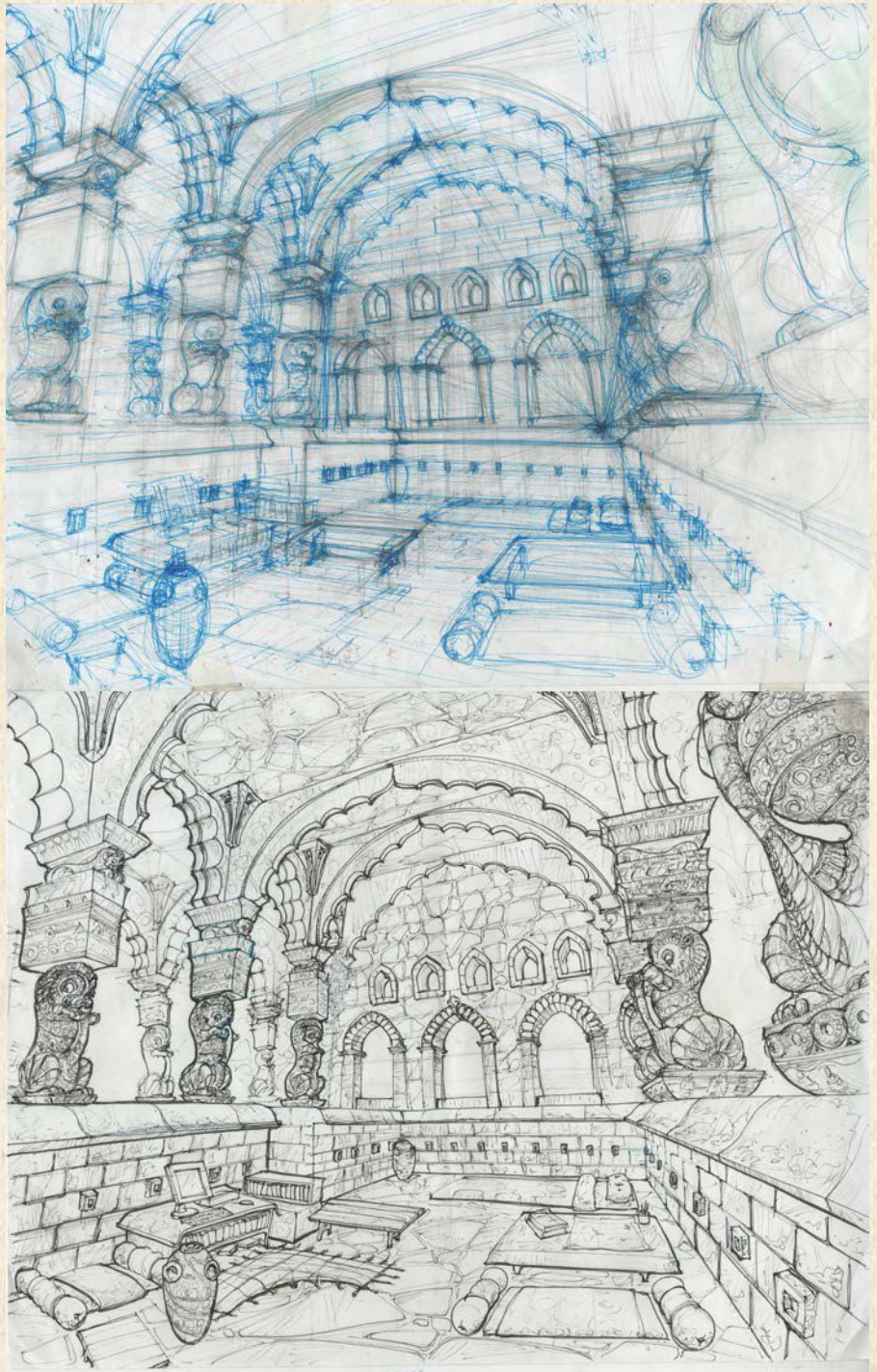
I use effects that not only convey the form, function, and texture of the subject but also the atmosphere, character, and context. I have tried lots of different materials and if something isn't working I keep at it until it does work for me. I like to experiment with all kinds of materials and techniques. I favor many brands including Camlin, Natraj, Staedtler, and Pigma Microns but a pen is a tool and any brand is just as good as another. I think it isn't the tool that is important but what is drawn with the tool. I would really love to use the materials that were used by the ancient Tamil and Indian artists and designers, as well the techniques and media that the greats such as Michelangelo, Bridgeman and Da Vinci used.

### Sketching techniques

I use line drawing techniques to translate what my eyes see on to paper; to read and define the subject by layering the light and shadows of the form and shape. It is my duty, as an artist, to translate an object's physical form on to paper through the use of my visual language and line work. I recommend that artists try something new such as a different cross-hatching technique or put down bold lines and strokes; be confident in your drawing and sketching.

I found it challenging to understand the values and forms of certain mechanical objects, I used to start very loosely, then applied perspective construction lines as a layer and above that draw in the fine clean lines. I have been advised to reduce the lines while I draw, to make it look clean and precise, for that my mentor showed me the technique called the 'Line Economy' where an artist should think, read, and reason before putting down each and every line, this was useful advice to help me improve my technique.

I believe that having formal instruction is an important aspect of learning art and becoming a successful artist; it can be more effective and quicker than trying to kick start a sketching habit and become an artist later. It is also essential to make sure you maintain a sketching habit; you need to spend a lot of time doing sketches and testing out new techniques. You can still achieve success through self learning and determination but you need to make sure to schedule time to practice and stick to it. In the future I would like to spend some time learning and developing techniques to bring realism into my art. ●



● Progress and final sketch of Rajkumar's future workspace based on Dravidian architecture

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### The importance of the story

Your design ideas can be complicated, but remember that the story is more important than that. A story will help you to express and communicate your complex ideas in a simple way. By sticking to a storyline your work will have consistency, there won't be any confusing or conflicting imagery, which could turn a great piece in to a confusing mess.





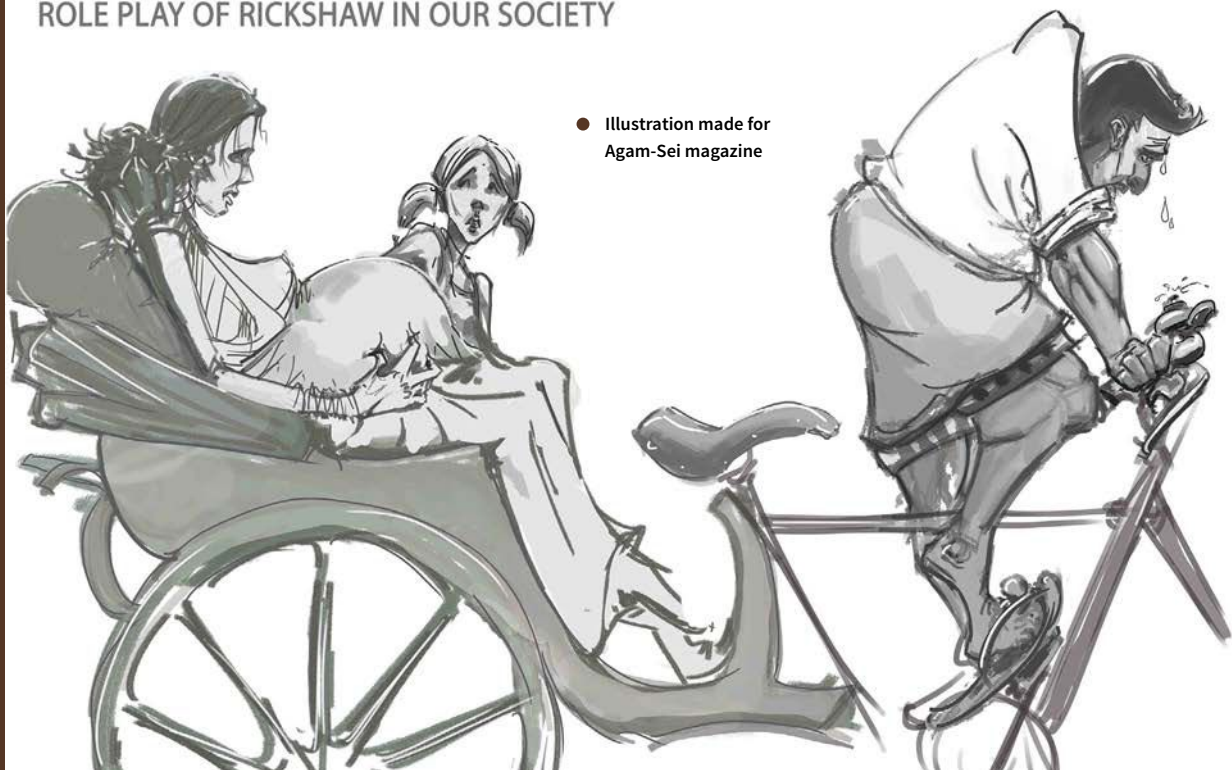


## ⚡ RAJKUMAR'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

### **Role Play of Rickshaw in our Society**

This artwork illustrates a number of events and emotions in a single frame. First, the Rickshaw man is putting in all his effort to get the vehicle to go faster, so he can get the pregnant lady to her destination in time. Second, the pregnant lady is suffering in pain and is tired crying. Finally, the daughter of the pregnant woman is unsure what to do or how to comfort her mother. These different emotions and people are the letters and words that artists shape into a story.

#### ROLE PLAY OF RICKSHAW IN OUR SOCIETY

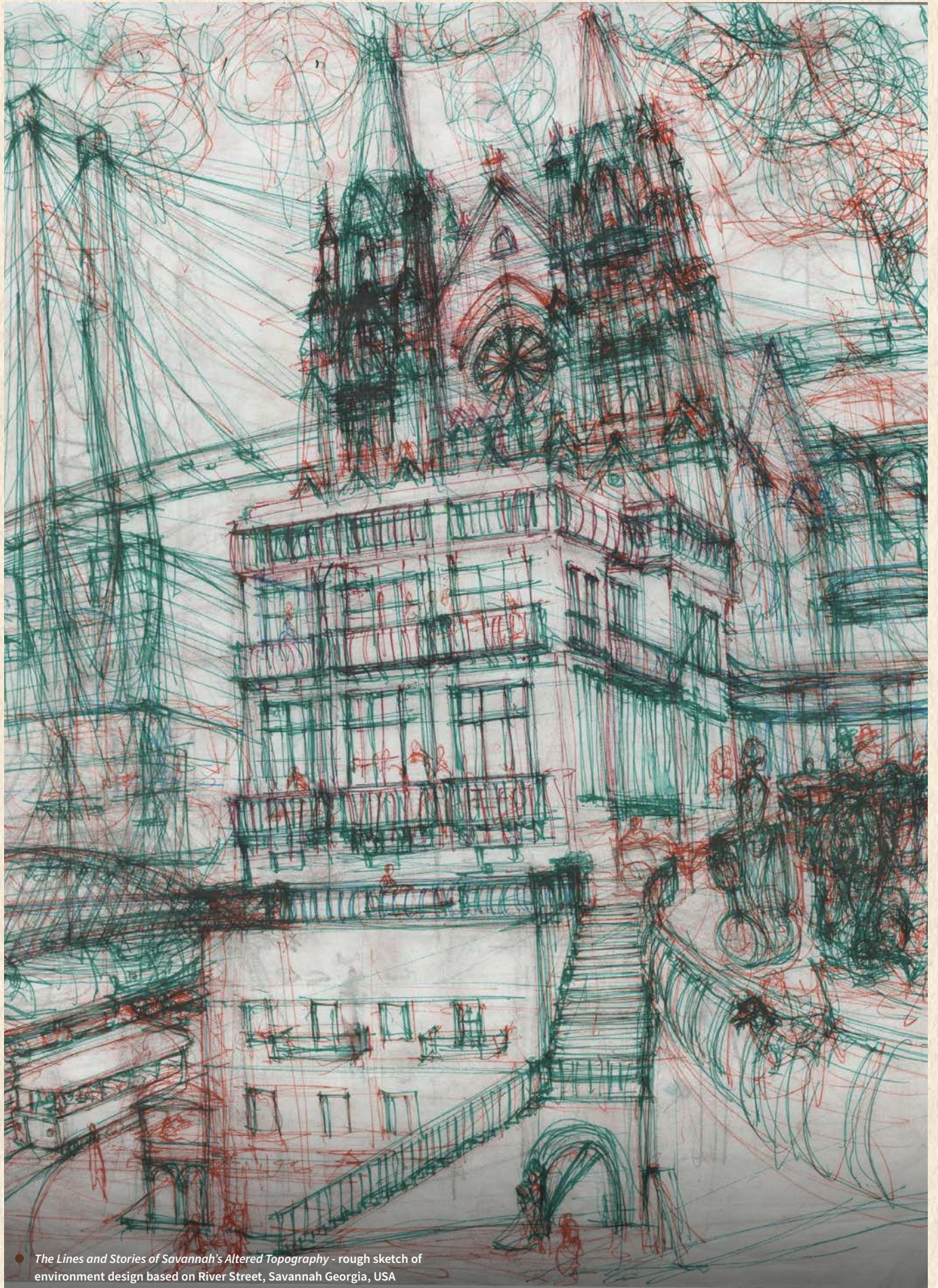


● Illustration made for Agam-Sei magazine

● Two characters from my sketchbook







● The Lines and Stories of Savannah's Altered Topography - rough sketch of environment design based on River Street, Savannah Georgia, USA





● *The Lines and Stories of Savannah's Altered Topography* - finished sketch of environment design based on River Street, Savannah Georgia, USA



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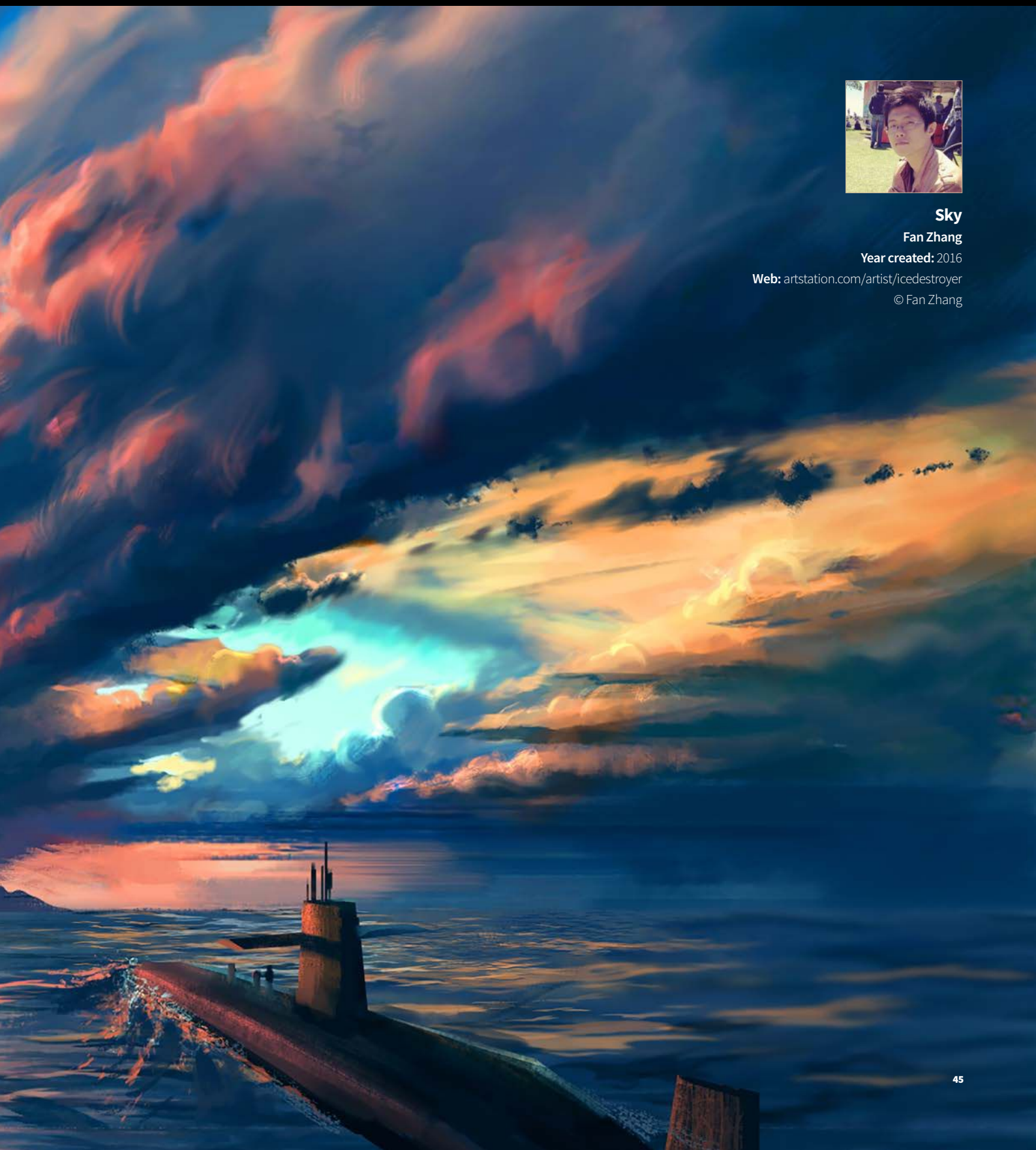
### Sky

Fan Zhang

Year created: 2016

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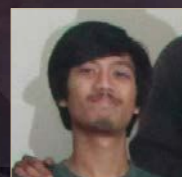
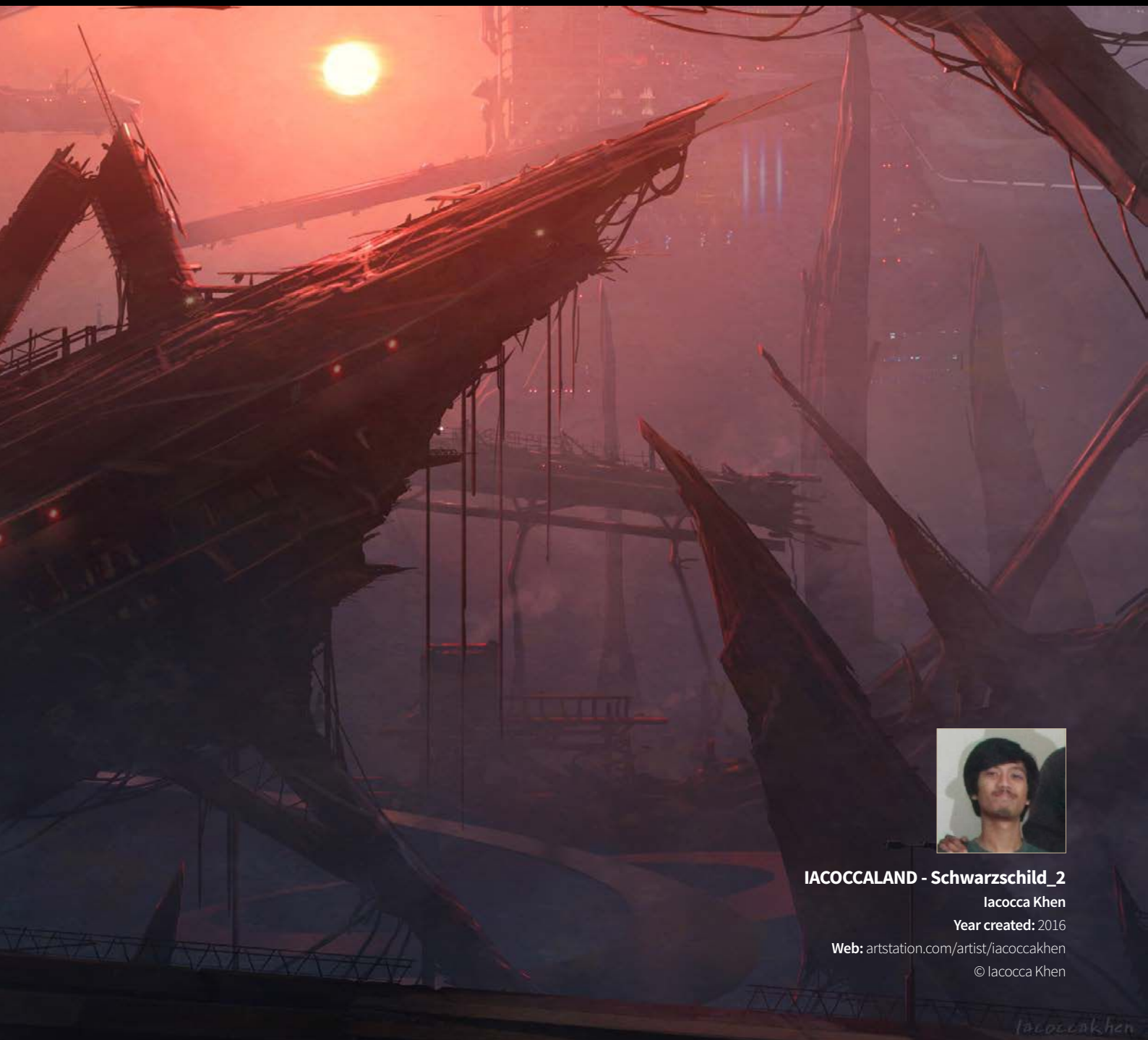
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**IACOCALAND - Schwarzschild\_2**

Iacocca Khen

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*iacoccakhen*





## Delivery

Andrzej Dybowski

Year created: 2016

Web: [andrzejdybowski.com](http://andrzejdybowski.com)

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## Moon Observations

Erica June Lahaie

Year created: 2016

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## The Orc

Dave Paget

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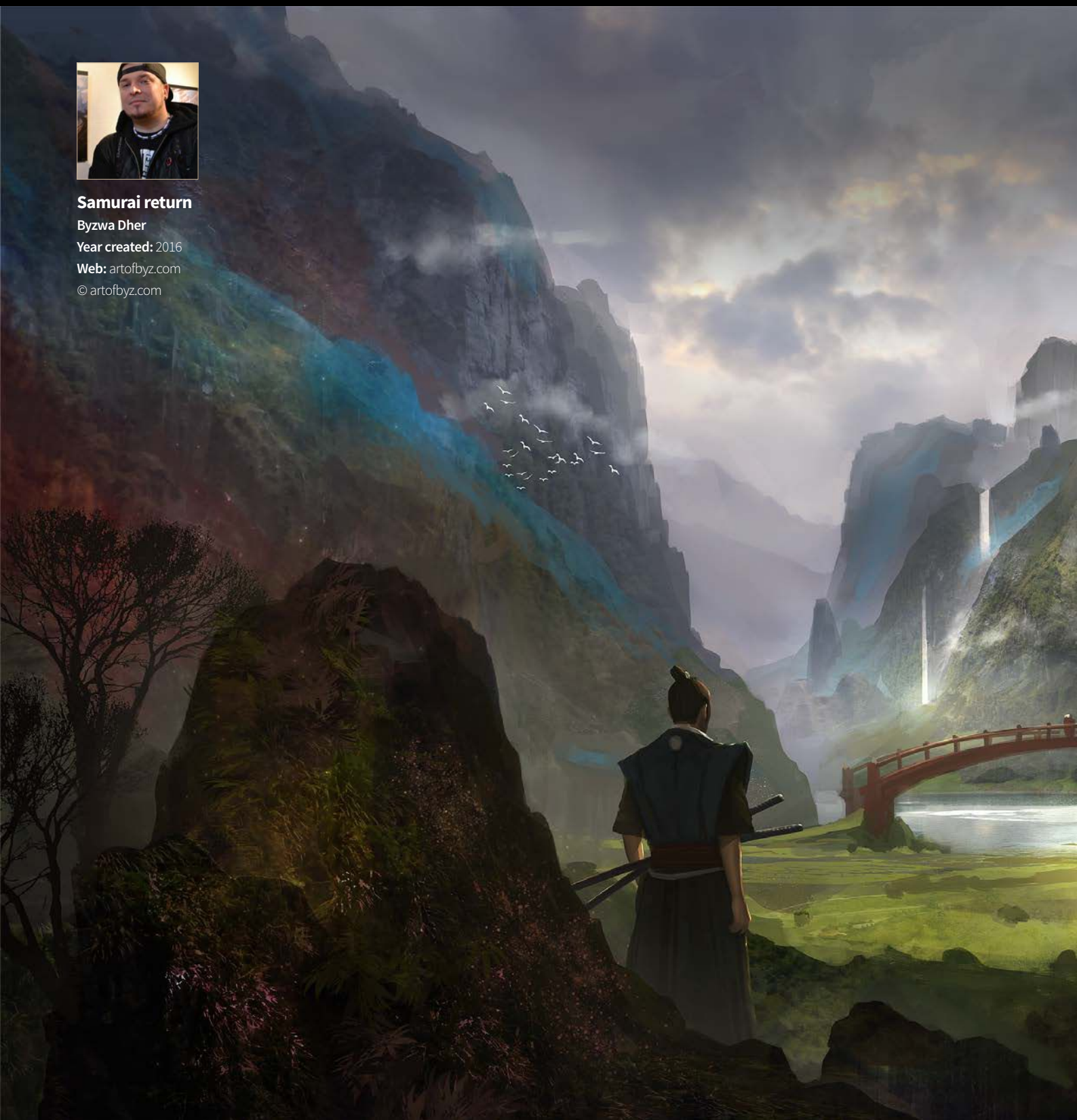
### Samurai return

Byzwa Dher

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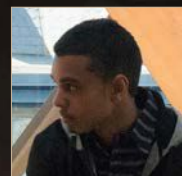
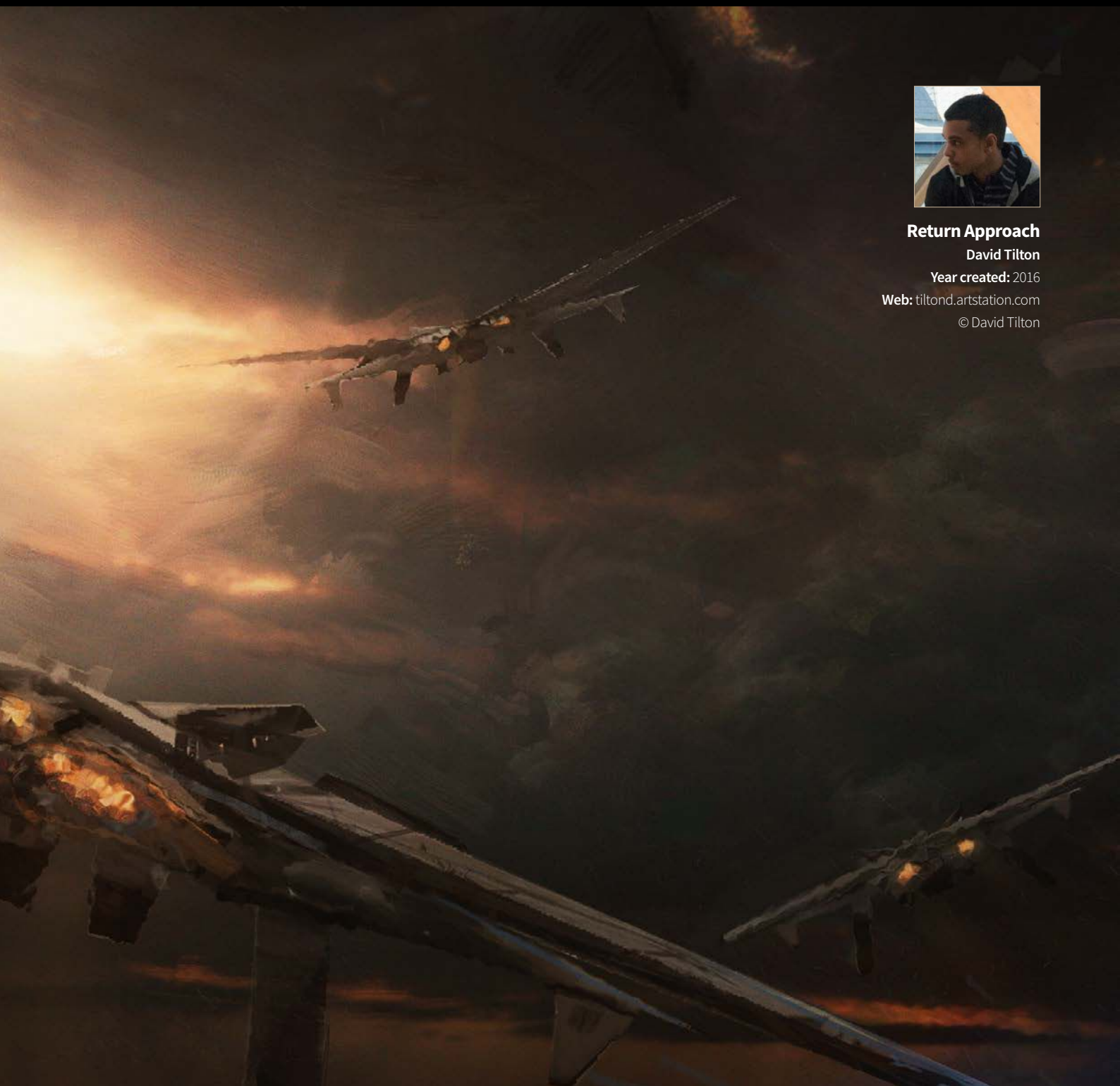












### **Return Approach**

David Tilton

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### **River Crossing**

Cody Williams

Year created: 2016

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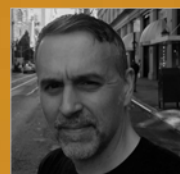












## P.E.L (Planetary Expedition Lightweight) Suit

Mark Kent

Year created: 2016

Web: [mkentart.com](http://mkentart.com)

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### Scraps

Satoshi Takahara

Year created: 2016

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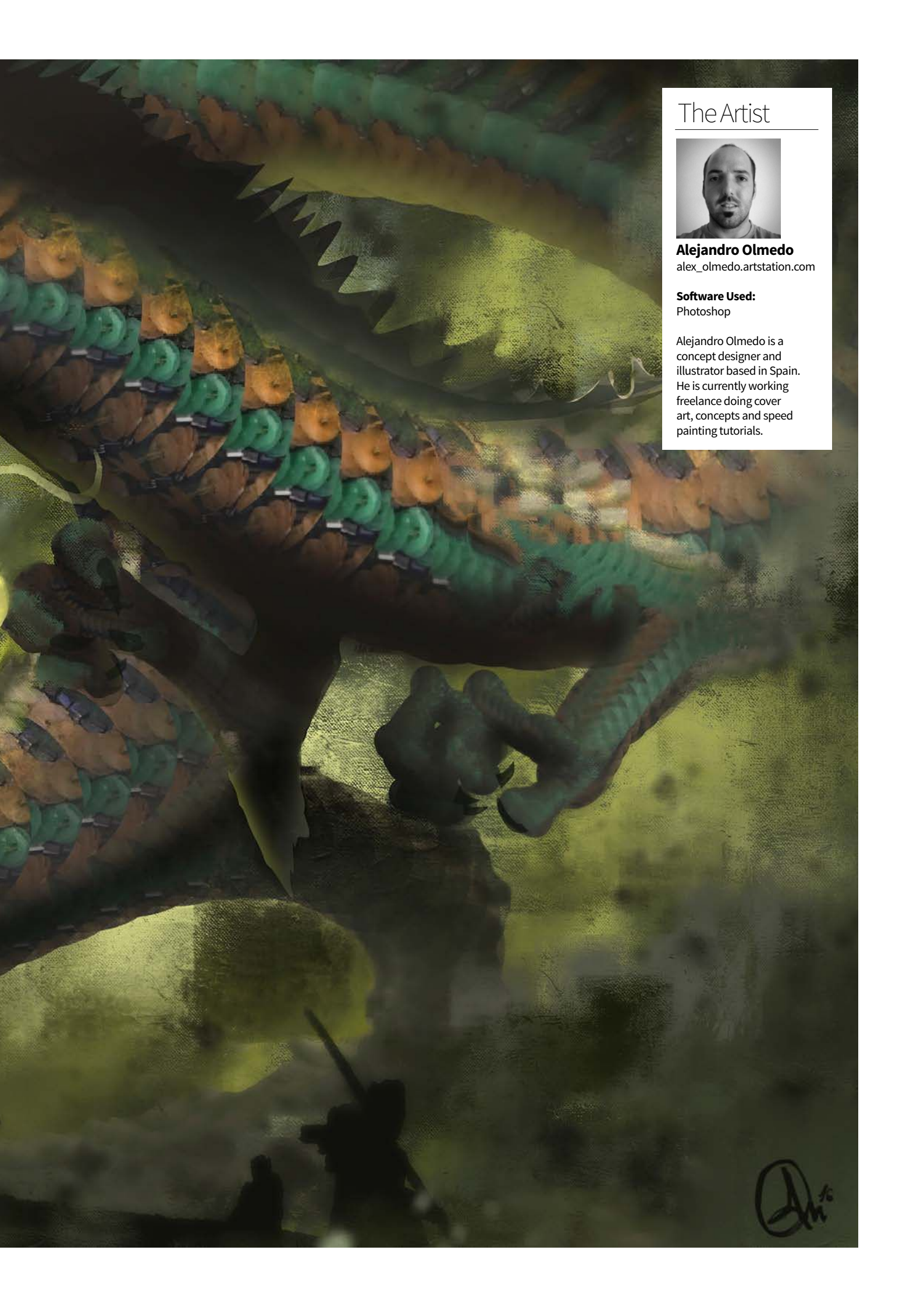
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Textures



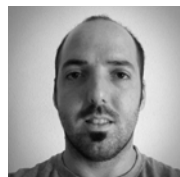
# Speed paint an eastern dragon

Alejandro Olmedo shows how to use the Mixer Brush tool to speed paint an eastern dragon in one hour [▶](#)





## The Artist



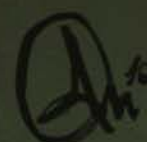
**Alejandro Olmedo**

[alex\\_olmedo.artstation.com](http://alex_olmedo.artstation.com)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Alejandro Olmedo is a concept designer and illustrator based in Spain. He is currently working freelance doing cover art, concepts and speed painting tutorials.





## Speed paint a fantasy scene in one hour...

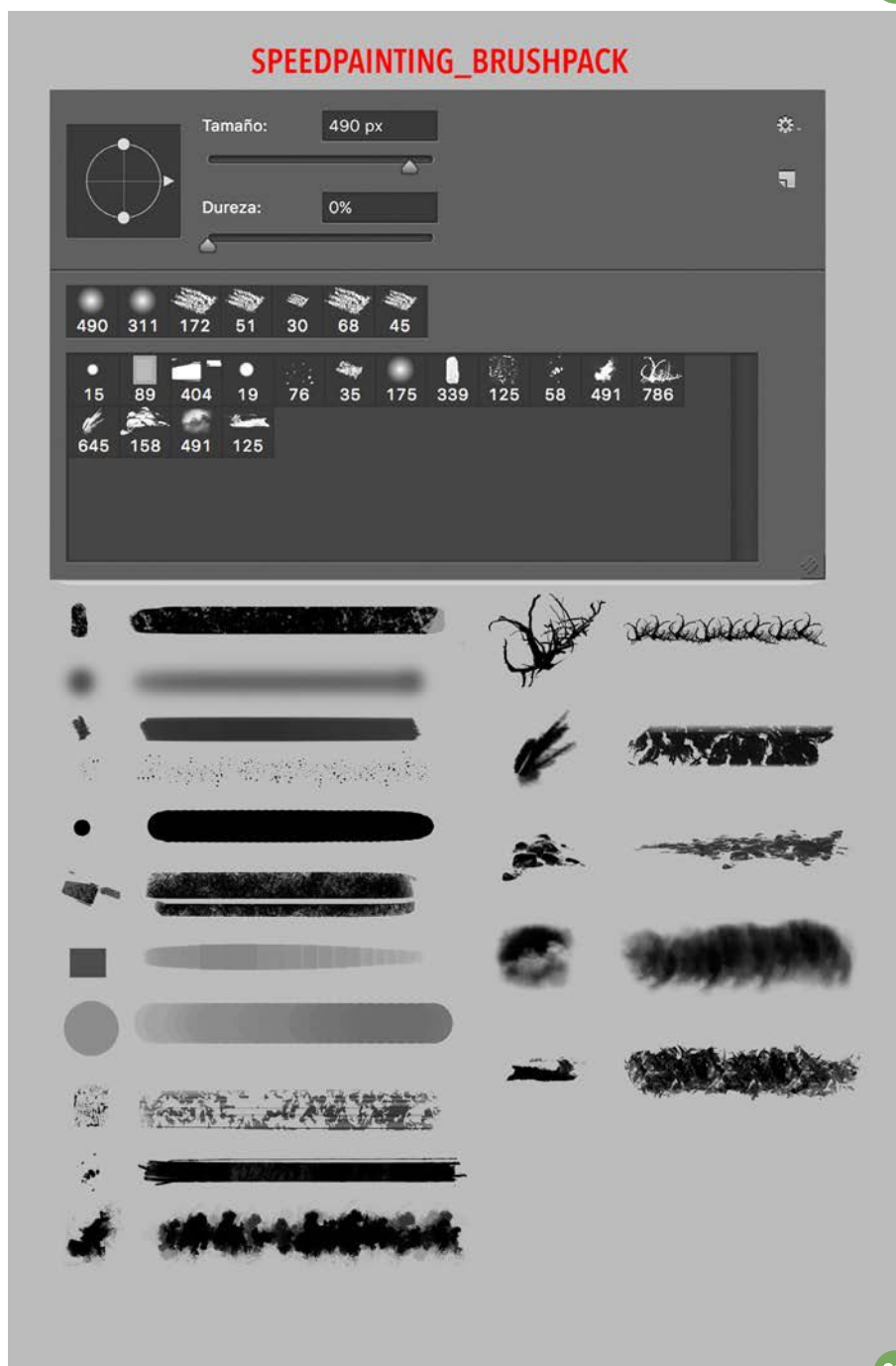
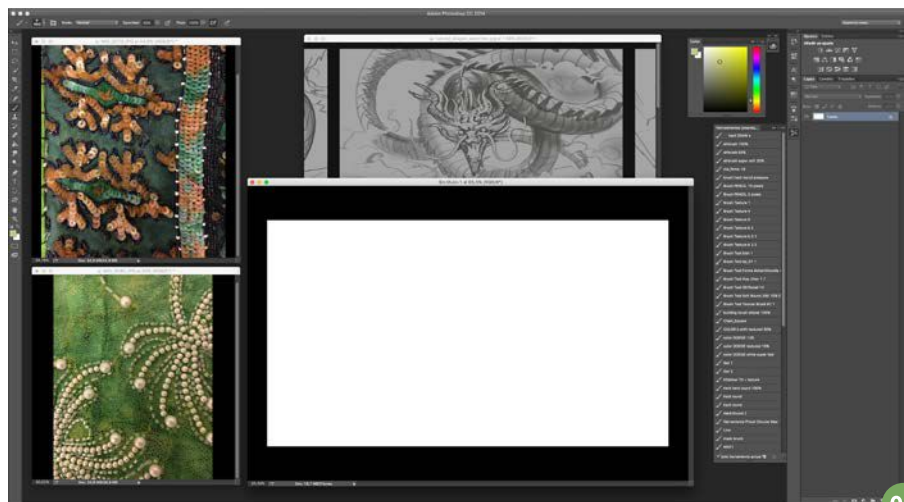
In this tutorial we will be creating an eastern dragon speed painting in one hour. We will use the Mixer Brush tool which is becoming more and more popular – it is great for imitating traditional painting techniques such as mixing colors. The first thing you should do before even opening your painting software is to research your theme, in this case an eastern dragon. As well as finding reference images, try to read around the subject to get a feel for the character of the beast – this will help with design choices. This tutorial will also show you how ordinary objects found in your home can serve as a base for a custom brush or texture.

**01 Preparing the workspace:** I find it very useful to spend a little time at the beginning of a project to set up your workspace and do a little research. Everyone works differently and you need to find a way that works for you. I like to do a bit of brainstorming and create some thumbnails before I start; I have these open on my screen, along with any reference images, so I can reference them easily. You can use two images of my sister's embroidery as references or textures.

**02 Speed painting brush pack:** You might find it useful to create a separate brush pack specifically for your speed painting projects – since time is a precious resource when doing speed paintings you don't want to spend it searching through all your brushes for a specific one. I have put together a small pack of brushes that you can download. In the pack there are: a standard soft and hard brush, a round brush for the dragon, as well as several texture brushes.

**"I highly recommend that you put each part on separate layers, this way you will be able to make changes without affecting the whole image"**

**03 Initial body shape:** With your workspace set up and brushes installed it is time to work on drawing the dragon's body. We will use the Mixer Brush tool to draw a silhouette of the dragon's sinuous body. I highly recommend that you put each part on separate layers, this way you will be able to make changes without affecting the whole image. From my brush pack select the round brush with Shape Dynamics setting active and sample an interesting part of one of the photos (sequins.jpg). You can think of the Mixer Brush tool as a sort of Stamp Clone but once the starting point has been memorized (the





sample), you can free paint with it. You can adjust the parameters which affect how the sample interacts with the canvas and existing strokes. You can get a staggered texture that mimics the scales of the dragon's body by adjusting the spacing slider (Brushes > Brush Tip Shape).

**04** **Minor shape corrections:** If you aren't happy with the shape of the dragon's body or you want to make some minor modifications to the anatomy you can use the Liquify filter (Filter > Liquify or Shift+Ctrl+X). This is a powerful tool that will allow you to distort your image with a range of different options and settings. You may want to expand the parts of the body that are closest to the viewer and shrink those that are furthest away. ►

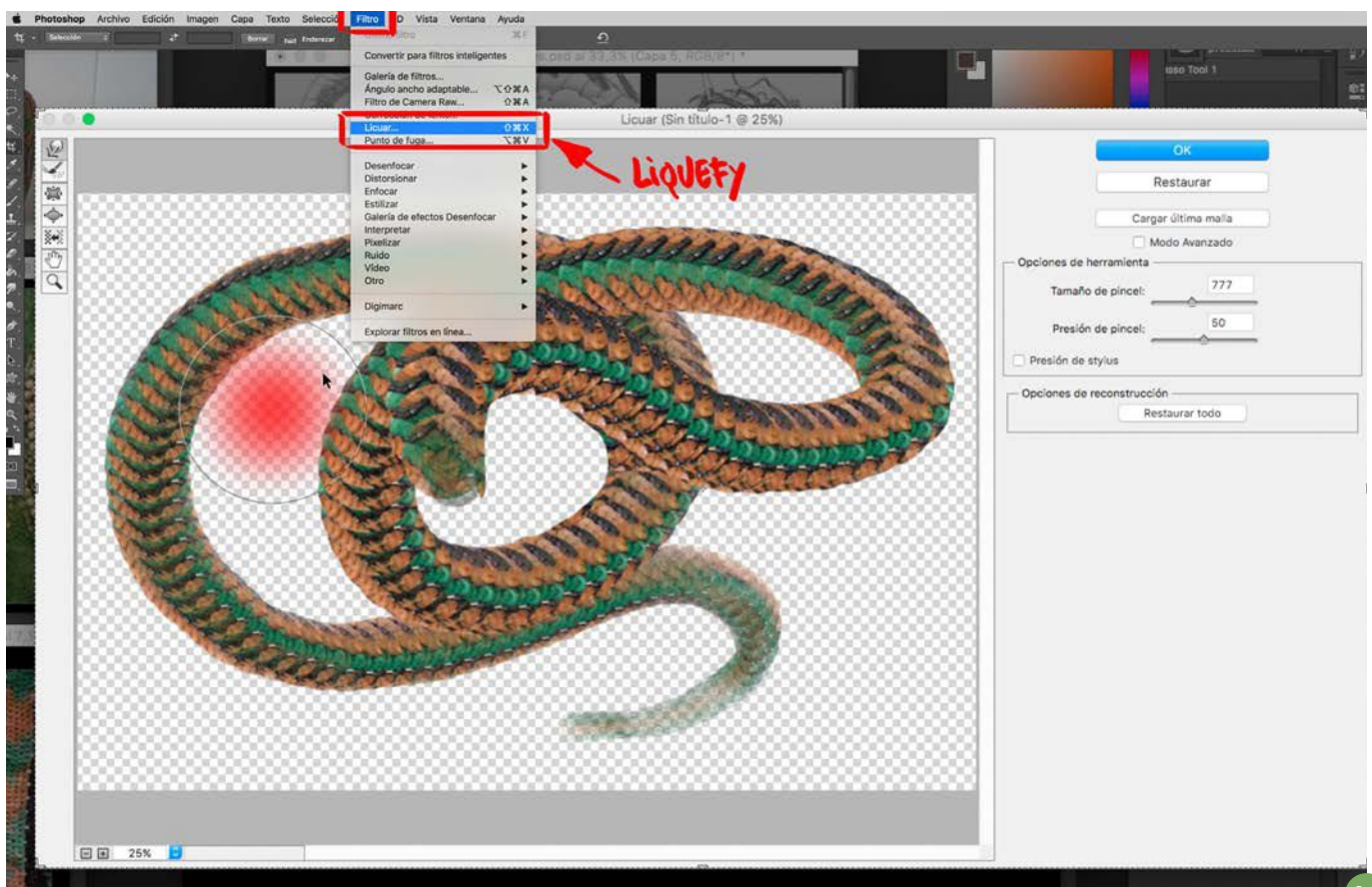


03

- 01** Set up your workspace to suit your working style
- 02** Having a specific speed painting brush pack can save you time
- 03** Use references and the Mixer Brush tool to create interesting textures
- 04** Use Liquify to make adjustments to the body's shape

## ⚡ TOOL TIP Mixer Brush tool

The Mixer Brush tool is one of the four brush options that can be found in the brush box on the tools menu – you can bring them up by clicking on the small arrow in the lower corner of the box. To use, simply choose the last option (the brush has a droplet above it); it has a number of variable parameters that appear in the top menu. These parameters help you to achieve a painterly look as well as a range of other effects; you can change the wetness, flow, load and the amount of mixture in the reservoir.



04



**05 Atmospheric perspective:** To add a touch of realism and create the illusion of depth to your painting you can apply the principle of atmospheric perspective – colors are weaker the further away they are from the viewer.

Apply a Clipping Mask (hold down Alt, position the mouse between two layers in the Layer panel and click or Layers > Create Clipping Mask) over the silhouette layer and with the soft brush (Opacity set to 50%) and paint white the parts

that are further away from the viewer, e.g. the tail. With the same brush – set to Multiply and a dark color picked from the image – work on the shadows to give more volume to the silhouette, especially the areas closer to the viewer.

**06 Adding details to the body:** If you are happy with the design of the body you can add some extra details to really bring the dragon to life. Hopefully the sample and Mixer Brush tool has given you a clear indication of

what is the top (dorsal) and bottom (ventral) of the body. Using the Mixer Brush tool, sample the second reference photo (beads.jpg) and draw a line of dorsal spines along the dragon.

To get a more abstract look you might want to have a play around with the Shape Dynamics, Texture, and Transfer options located in the Brushes panel. I add some brushstrokes here and there without being too concerned of the details at this point.



05



06



**07 Forearms:** To make it clear that this is a dragon and not a snake it is important to give him front legs. As the basic shape of the legs is a cylinder you can use a brush that has a slight spacing which will help you create something similar to a scaled tube. You don't have to make detailed dragon legs because this is a speed painting. You only need to do a rough sketch of a simple silhouette with small details; this should be enough to convince the viewer.

**08 Head design:** Designing the head is undoubtedly one of the most important and complicated steps of the process. Use your sketches or thumbnails as reference to create the basic shape of the head with the square brush in Mixer mode; focus on the size, orientation and perspective. Use existing colors in the image to draw in the fur and spines on the face as well as the shadows and highlights; try to use a variety of samples for the brush so you have an interesting selection of textures and colors.

**09 Horns:** Another prominent feature of the eastern dragon is the horns, there are many different designs to choose from but I suggest using your initial sketches as a guide. As with the previous steps you should focus on capturing the basic shape and matching the



07



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**05** Use the principles of atmospheric perspective to create the illusion of depth

**06** Add extra details such as a row of spines running down the dragon's body

**07** Paint in front legs with enough detail to convince the viewer what they are

**08** Roughly block in the face using the samples taken from the body

**09** The different stages of drawing the horns

## ⚡ TOOL TIP

### The Smudge tool

When I first started digital painting I had a lot of trouble getting spontaneous and natural effects that I could achieve with traditional techniques. Thanks to a tutorial I found by James Paick I started to include the Smudge tool in my workflow. Since then it has become an essential part of my toolbox, it is super useful for making clouds without using custom brushes because it melts distracting edges and can add dynamism and movement to areas of the painting. I highly recommend you try using it!



09

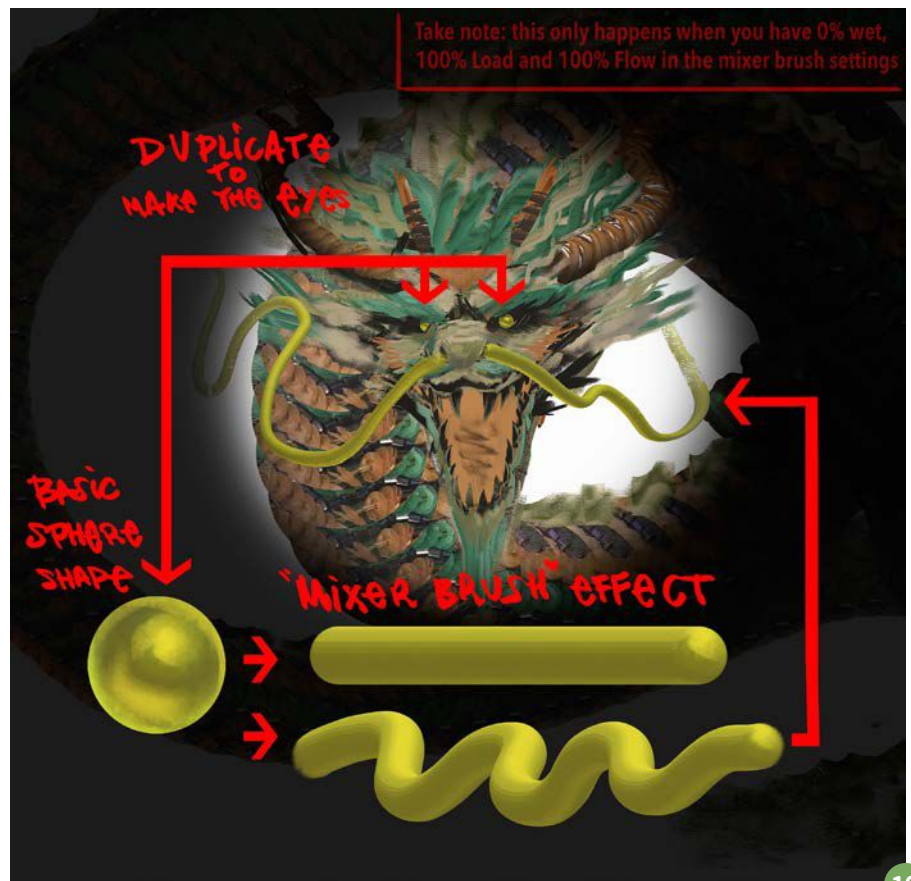


**“Like any illustration, it is important to have a clear focal point, and obviously in this case that is the dragon’s head”**

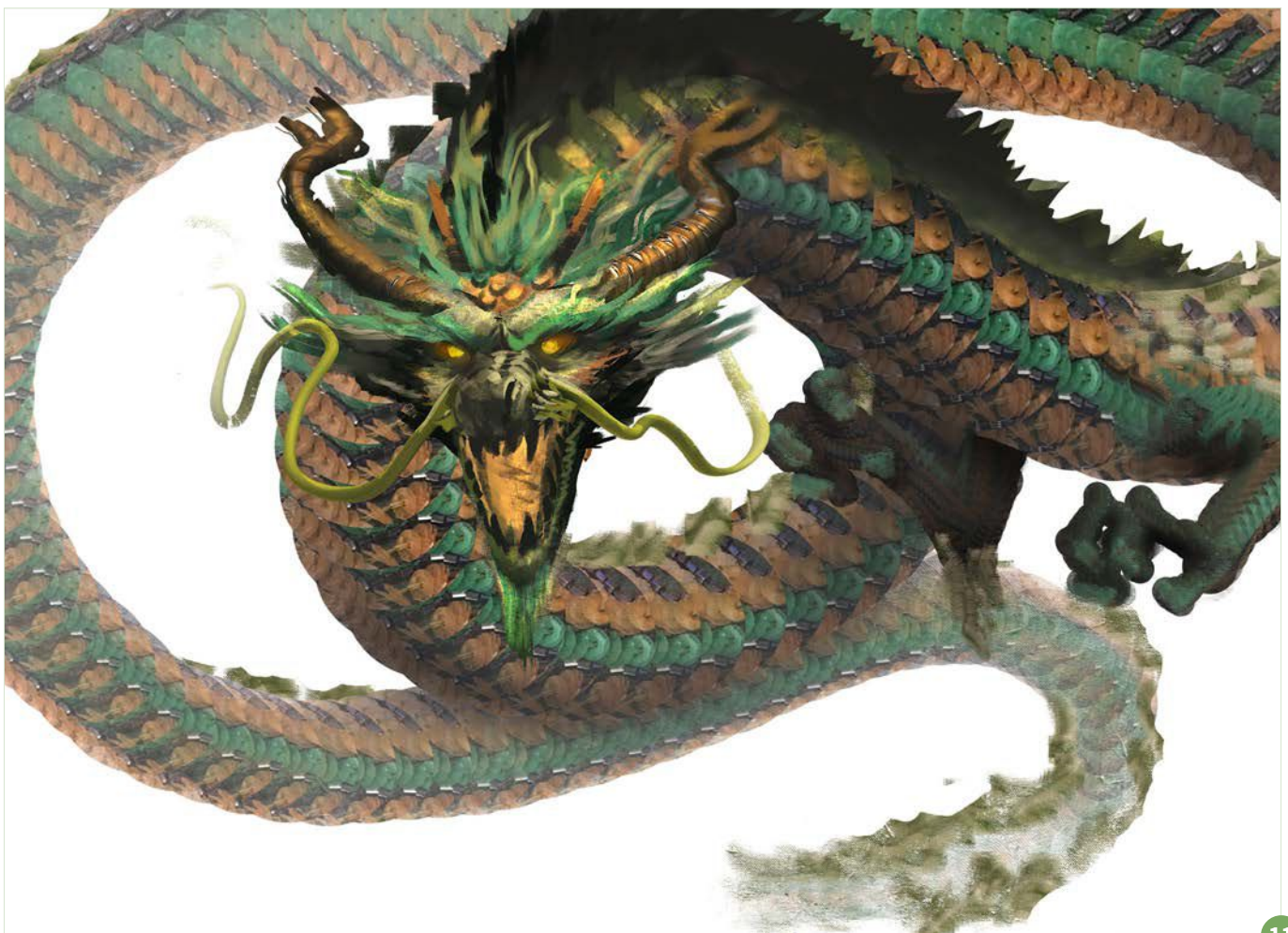
angle of the head. When you are happy with how the horns look, lock the transparent pixels (the first icon in the Layers palette where it says Lock). This means that when you paint you will only affect the colored pixels, which makes it easier to add textures and later, more volume and roundness with a multiply soft brush.

**10** **Small details:** Now it is time to add those little details that make this a recognizable eastern dragon; the eyes, teeth, and whiskers. Create a sphere using the Marquee tool to make bright, golden eyes and use the Lasso tool to create sharp jagged teeth. To paint the long graceful whiskers, follow the same process as Step 06; use the Mixer brush with the golden eye sphere as a base. This adds yet another color to the palette of the scene.

**11** **Focal point:** Like any illustration, it is important to have a clear focal point, and obviously in this case that is the dragon’s



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head. Therefore, it is worth spending a little more time on detailing the face using both the Normal and Mixer brushes. This is also a good time to make any minor corrections to the size or angle of the head, for example; I modified the muzzle by elongating it with Free Transform (Ctrl+T). To create more interest and capture the viewer's attention you can make the dorsal spines bigger and more impressive which will also add contrast between the body and head.

**12 First lighting pass:** The design of the dragon is almost complete, so the next thing to do is to focus on the lighting. Hopefully you have all the different elements on separate layers as this will make it so much easier to select what you want to lighten or darken. Basically you need to darken the areas in shadow, so select the layers with the dark areas and set the Blending mode to Darken. To enhance the scene and use a little artistic license you could even darken some of the areas that aren't actually in shadow. To add some warm highlights to the upper parts of the head and body, create a new layer, filled in black, and set the Blending mode to Color Dodge.

**13 Background:** So far you have only made the dragon; it is now time to add a background. I am an environment artist and prefer to work this way when time is limited so that I can focus on the focal point and not get caught up detailing the background and know how much time I have to do everything. Using some of the brushes from the download pack, color pick warm tones (similar to the highlights ►

## ⚡ PRO TIPS

### Flipping the canvas

A while ago I thought flipping the canvas was just a bad habit of some artists; I watched their videos and saw how they were constantly flipping the image in all directions. I was wrong; this is a very useful habit that greatly improves your work. If you use it from the very start of a painting you can avoid problems in the composition. Looking at your work from the same place for a long time can make your brain blind to certain errors that could be spotted by flipping the canvas. I have my own shortcut for this option.

### The importance of speed paintings

Many people believe that doing speed painting is a waste of time, but it certainly is super useful (at least for me) for trying new techniques, brushes, or ideas. Often the best works arise from drawings that you do without pressure and where you are just having fun, experimenting and enjoying while learning. So try it, take a break from hard work and make a quick sketch, maybe it will launch your career!

### Vísteme despacio, que tengo prisa (dress me slowly that I'm in a hurry)

This common Spanish expression perfectly describes what I mean. Some people confuse "painting fast" with "painting hastily". What I am trying to say is that rushing and carelessly making brushstrokes might lead to a disaster. Whereas spending a little time to properly work something out could save you time and energy in the long run. If I hadn't spent five or so minutes designing the dragon's body, I may not have been able to finish the painting within an hour.

**10** This is how the Mixer Brush tool works when we use a sphere as sample and a standard round brush

**11** Spend a bit of time defining the face to draw the viewer's attention

**12** Use blending modes to add highlights and shadows without affecting the rest of the paper





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15

## “The painting should tell some sort of story”

from the previous step) and paint a smoky background with some clouds – this is a great way to bring everything together. This is also a good time to add in any forgotten details, such as the hind legs!

**14 Foreground:** The painting should tell some sort of story. It lacks something at this point to act as a secondary focal point and balance out the composition, giving the illusion of depth – not to mention something for the dragon to attack! Sketch in a couple of warriors that are looking up at this huge fantastical beast. You might want to paint some poles to add to the story and also give an idea of scale – show the viewer just how big the dragon is. A simple dark silhouette is probably enough for these characters because the lighting is quite subdued and they are not the main focal point.

**15 Final touches:** There are a few final touches to add before the scene is

## ⚡ TOOL TIP Liquify

This tool is very useful when you want to make small changes to your work – you can find it in the Filter menu. You can stretch or shrink, bend or crush a portion of your drawing without affecting the rest of it. It is widely used in portraits but I use it for many things instead of the Deform option of the Free Transform tool.

finished, such as adding particles and a bit of blurriness to give more dynamism to the painting. There are a couple of special brushes in the downloadable pack that are perfect for adding particles. Use these to paint a few spots here and there, in both light and dark tones.

Then apply different blur filters (Filter > Blur) at different intensities (Gaussian and Motion). As a final touch, copy everything on to a single new layer one layer (Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E) and then apply an Iris blur (Filter > Blur Gallery > Iris) this takes the viewer's attention away from the edges of the image and focuses them on the focal point; and you are done! ●

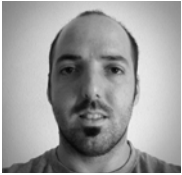
**13** A simple but effective background will help to push the mood of the painting

**14** A simple dark silhouette of some warriors in the foreground will help to add dimension to the scene

**15** A few VFX tricks to bring everything together



## The Artist



**Alejandro Olmedo**  
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Am



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# Design a sci-fi prison vehicle

Nick Foreman demonstrates how to design a sci-fi prison vehicle in 3ds Max and Corona before rendering it into a Photoshop scene ▶



## The Artist



**Nick Foreman**

[artstation.com/artist/kilo\\_three](http://artstation.com/artist/kilo_three)

**Software Used:**

3ds Max, Photoshop

Nick Foreman is a concept artist based in the UK. Freelance since 2001, Nick specializes in mechanical and environment design but enjoys pushing himself out of his comfort zone.





## Discover how basic 3D modeling can quickly enhance your vehicle designs...

In this step-by-step tutorial I explain the thumbnail-to-3D workflow for creating a basic scene complete with textures and lighting. We will then move into Photoshop where we will paint over everything and add the final details. My aim is to show you how useful 3D can be for setting up your paintings, if you only know the basics of 3D this should help you get more out of your work.

For 3D work I use 3ds Max but you can use whatever you are more comfortable with and still follow this guide. If you have not used

any 3D software yet but want to start, check out [www.sketchup.com](http://www.sketchup.com). SketchUp is free and relatively easy to pick up.

For those that also use 3ds Max, I will be talking about an awesome render engine called Corona. It is so easy to use and will give you lighting that is in the same league as software like KeyShot or V-Ray. So now let's get started!

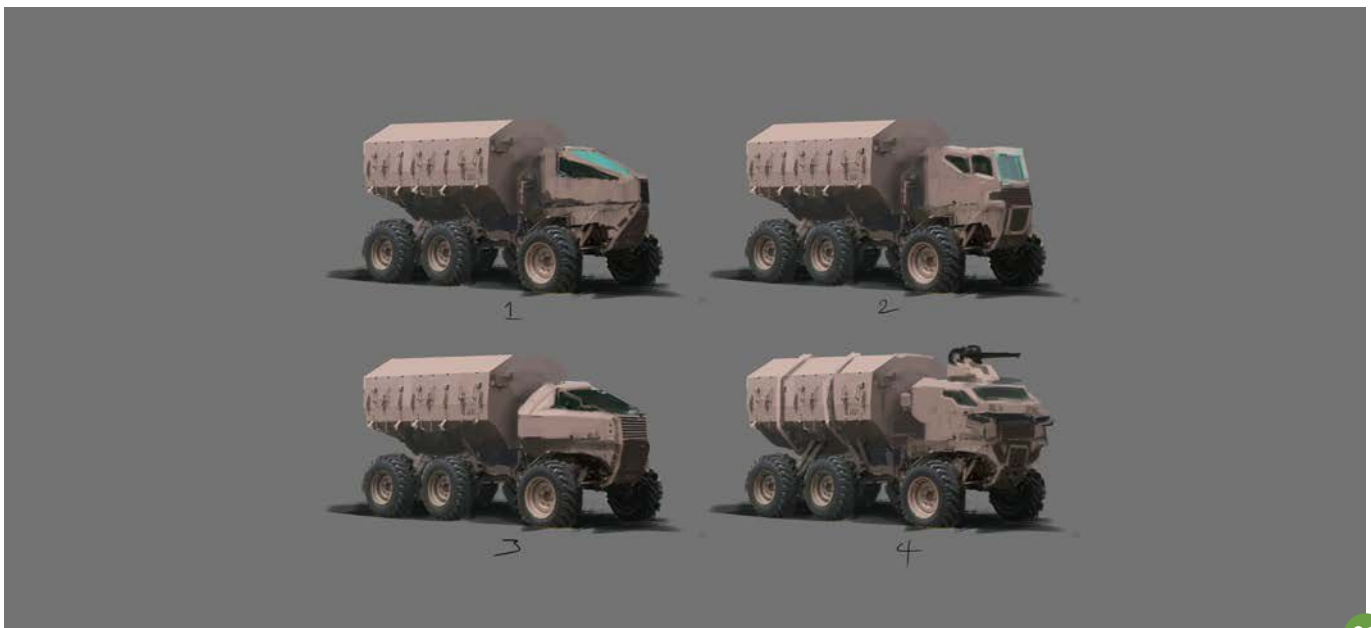
### 01 Photo-bashing your thumbnails:

Making thumbnails is a vital part of any project. You can quickly filter out uninteresting designs and refine the good ones with minimal effort. Everyone has a slightly different technique and I tend to go for messy photo-bashing.

The most important part of this process is having some good reference materials. I use Pinterest to collect all sorts of photos and because I love big trucks, I knew exactly where I was going to start with this piece.

Taking just three photos for inspiration, I quickly turn a four-wheeled military truck into a 6 × 6 vehicle and start sketching different cab designs. Don't worry if your thumbnails look ugly, as they will be improved during the refining process.

**02 Refining your design:** Once you have got a thumbnail that you think is worth developing, take it onto a new canvas and duplicate it. Then start to make changes to small details and evolve the design.



01

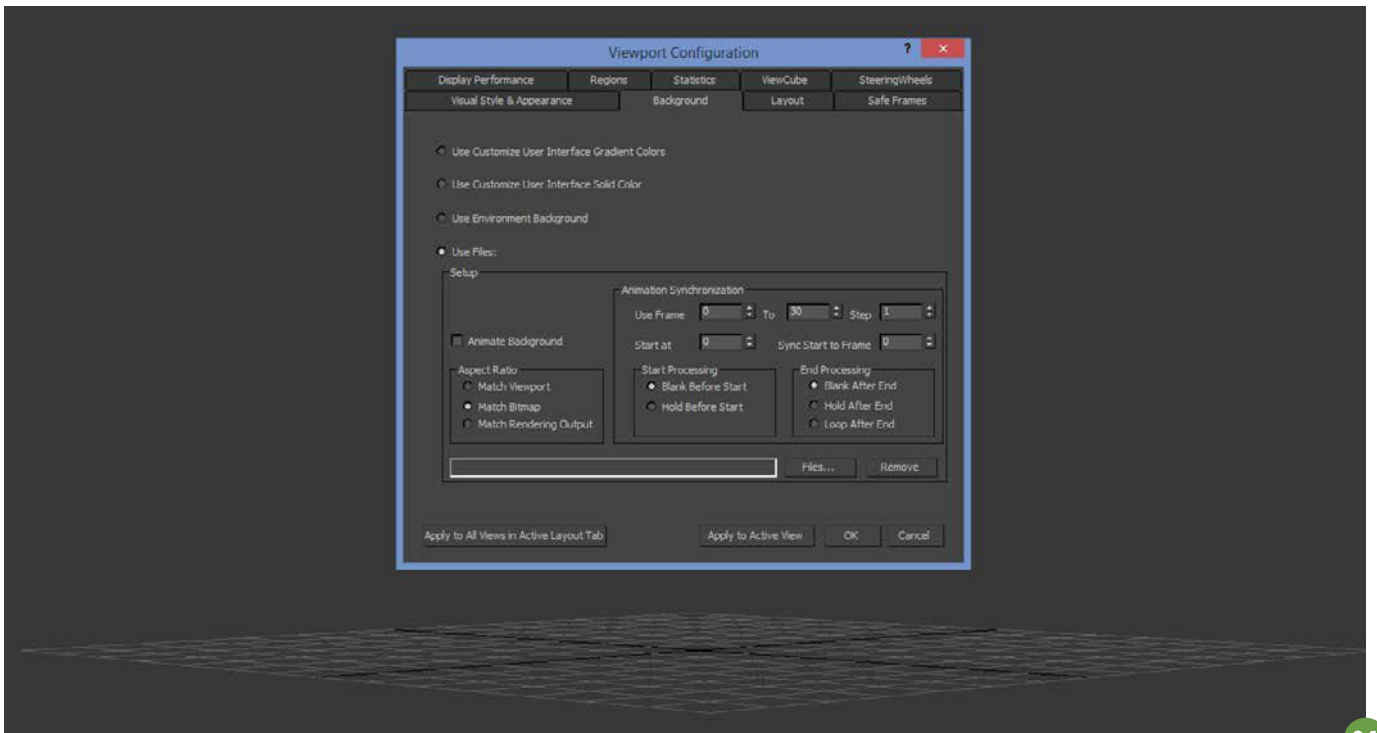


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This can be done as many times as you like, enabling you to add a bit here or shaving off a bit there. With each iteration of the design you will see what works and what does not. I add some color, and decals, and then pinch and stretch my truck until I have something that I feel looks halfway decent.

**03 Adding fine details:** This is the fun part of the initial design stage. By this step I have created a dirty, messy, but solid design to work with. Now I have to polish it up and make it more readable.

Taking your thumbnail onto a new canvas, increase the canvas size to about 3,000 pixels across, and then spend about an hour just cleaning up the big bits and working in the small details. First, I swap the roof-mounted gun for a pivoting crane and open up the rear to show where the prisoners go. Then I move on to

creating panel gaps, shut lines, scratches, wheels and improving whatever I'm not happy with (which is most of it).

There is no limit to the number of thumbnails you can make during this phase, so the more the merrier. I usually aim to make around thirty to fifty in total but this one comes together really quickly, mainly because I really want to make a massive sci-fi truck.

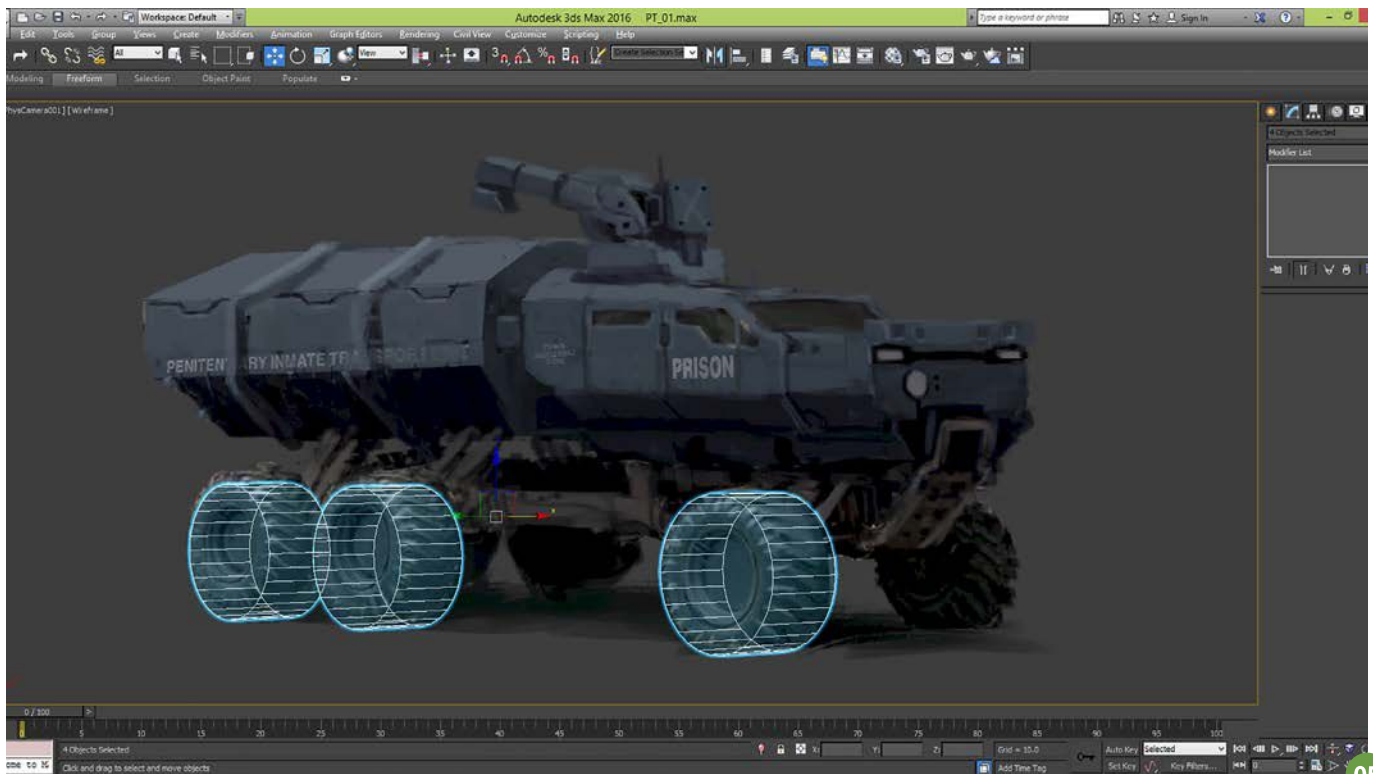
**04 Making your design in 3D:** The first step of working in 3D involves setting the thumbnail sketch as a background image in the viewport of the 3D software. I will explain how to do this in 3ds Max but almost all other 3D software has this feature, so you should be able to copy this method fairly easily.

In Perspective view, press Alt+B to bring up the Viewport Configuration window. Then in the

Background tab select the Use Files radio button. Now pressing the Files button at the bottom, find your sketch. Once you have selected the sketch, press the Match Bitmap radio button to size it correctly in the viewport, then hit OK. ►

- 01** Quickly paint over reference images to create a variety of thumbnail designs
- 02** Duplicate one of the thumbnails and develop different iterations of it to refine the design
- 03** In the final evolution of the thumbnail add more detail to inspire you later on
- 04** Set the viewport in 3ds Max with Match Bitmap selected to begin working in 3D





05

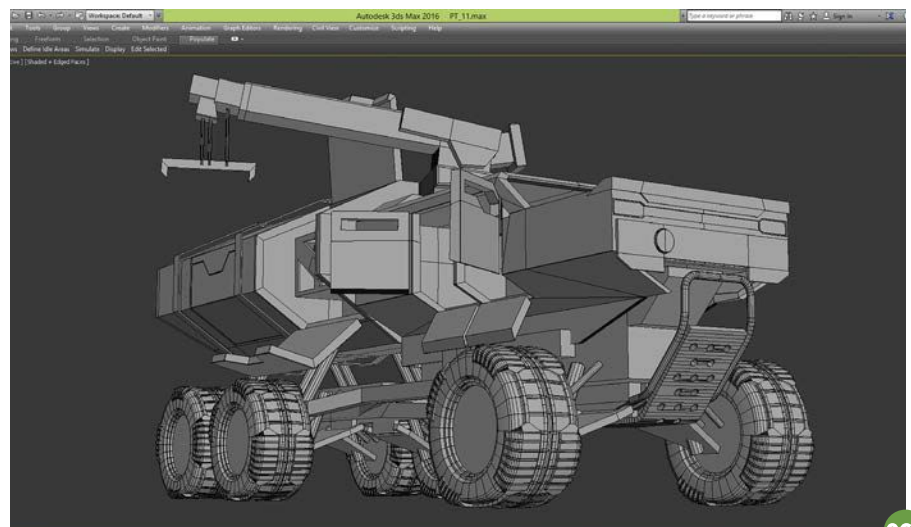
**“The main advantage to using a 3D model in your scene is that you can get an accurate perspective”**

**05 Laying the groundwork:** Now it is time to lay the groundwork for the 3D model of the vehicle. You can create a basic wheel using a cylinder. Press F3 for Wireframe mode, which draws objects without shading, and using the Orbit controls (Alt+click and hold the middle mouse button) you can move the view until the wheel is aligned with the sketch. Then fine tune the Zoom and field of view options in a way that suits the sketch.

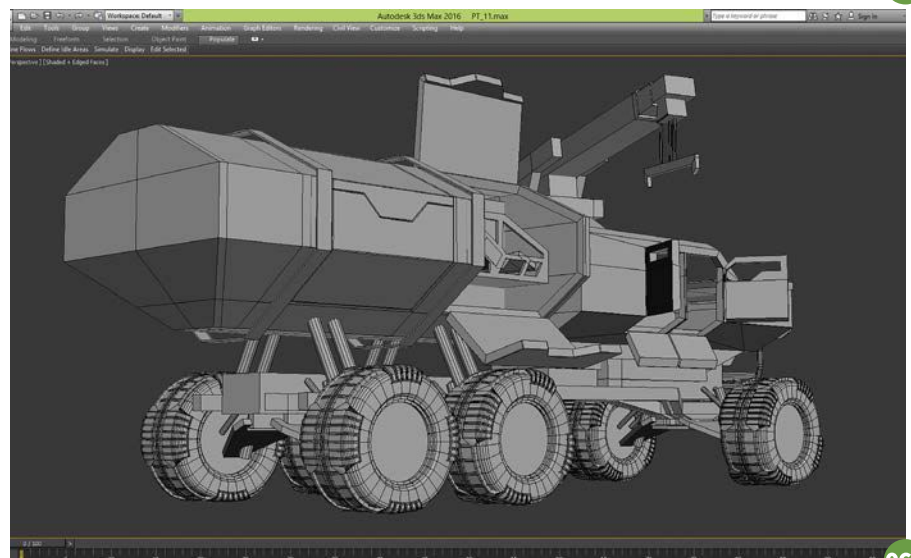
When the view and sketch is lined up, create a camera in that position (Ctrl+C). Duplicate the wheel as shown in the screenshot (image 05) and tweak the camera position until all the wheels also match the perspective. You now have a starting point from which you can start making a rough 3D model of the vehicle.

**06 Making your model:** When it comes to creating a 3D model to paint over you don't have to be a pro-modeler as detail will be added in the painting stage. My finished vehicle model is not perfect, but it inspires me and is quick to create. All the missing detail will be painted in later.

I make my wheels a little more detailed because, with trucks in particular, they seem to draw the viewer's attention more than anything else. If you

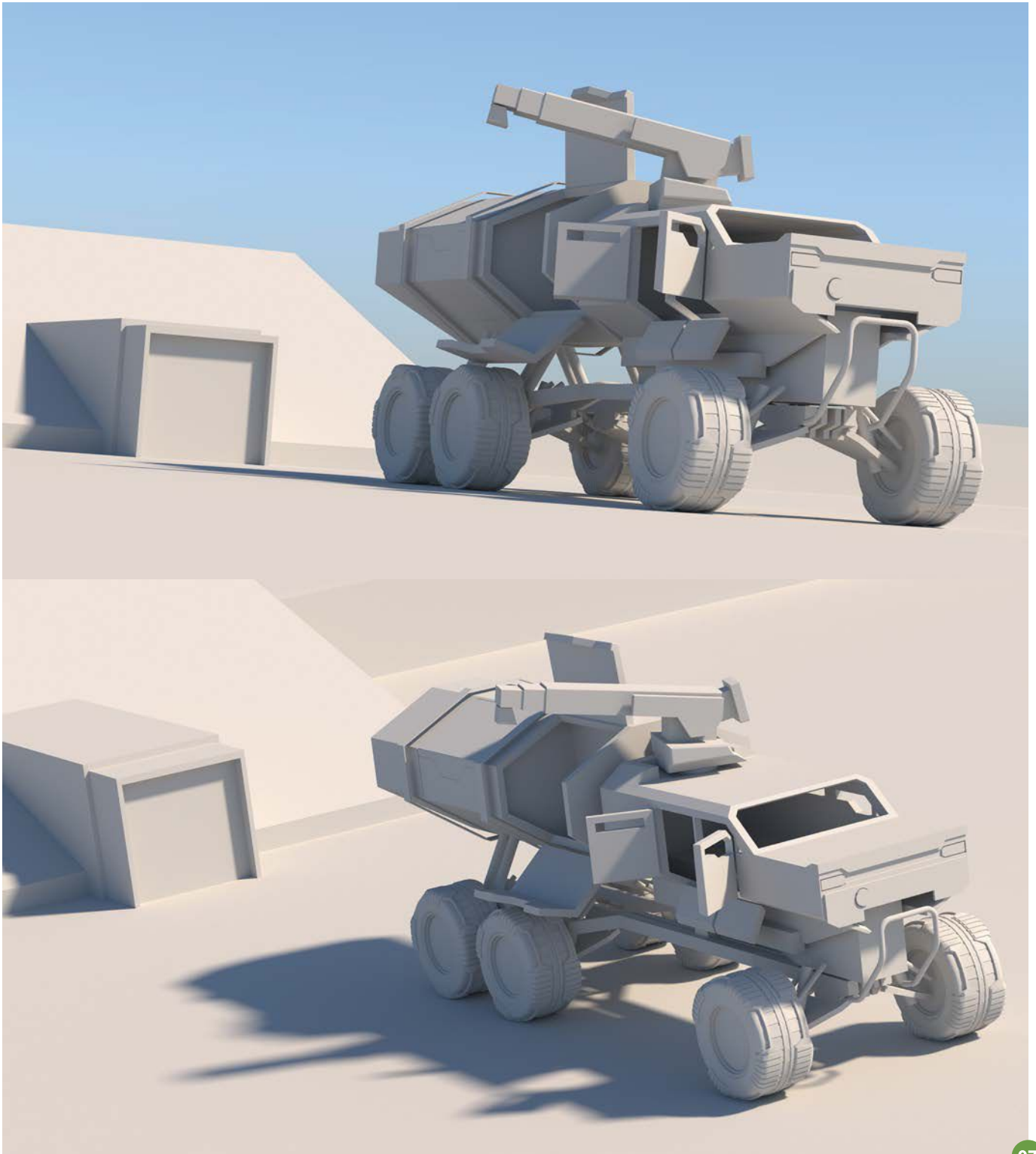


06a



06b





can make them look interesting you are off to a good start.

**07** **Why use 3D anyway?** The main advantage to using a 3D model in your scene is that you can get an accurate perspective; which is perfect for complex hard surface scenes like this. Also if you are working for a client who likes your painting but wants to see it from a different angle or two you can render your scene again with minimal extra work needed. In the

following steps I will walk you through a few easy ways to add large amounts of detail in a relatively short space of time. ►

**05** Use the Orbit control on the wheels to line up the model with the sketch for quick, simple results

**06a** A view of the front end of the truck model, based on the thumbnail sketch

**06b** The back end view of the truck. The model doesn't have to be perfect, just good enough to paint over

**07** A 3D model can be used to quickly design a scene in different ways and from different views

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**08** **Lights, camera, textures:** If you use either the 3ds Max or CINEMA 4D software, my top recommendation is to download Corona Renderer. It replaces the native renderer of your software with something much, much better. If you go to [www.corona-renderer.com/](http://www.corona-renderer.com/) download you can try the free Alpha version. It is easy to use with a guide on their site to follow and the results are spectacular!

**“Cut out elements in the scene and treat them as separate layers, so that you can paint directly onto them”**

Adding good lighting and some basic textures can give a 3D scene a few high detail areas to start improving upon. It is like hitting the ground running. For this tutorial I just use two basic metal

textures for the truck, a texture for the tires, and two concrete textures for the prison buildings.

**09** **Start painting:** Starting to paint the scene can often feel daunting when using 3D models. However, breaking the scene into sections can make this easier. Cut out elements in the scene and treat them as separate layers, so that you can paint directly onto them. Here I





have the truck, ground, prison wall, and the main building behind on their own layers.

Next choose a suitable sky to set the mood of the scene, and then you can start covering up all the objects without textures with some quick brushstrokes and photo-bashing. Nothing is set in stone here so you can come back to these later on if you change your mind.

**10 Increasing detail density:** Moving on to the truck now, create a new layer and start sketching some panel lines and hinges. Adding detail like this is an easy way to break up the large sections of the model, using them as blank canvases.

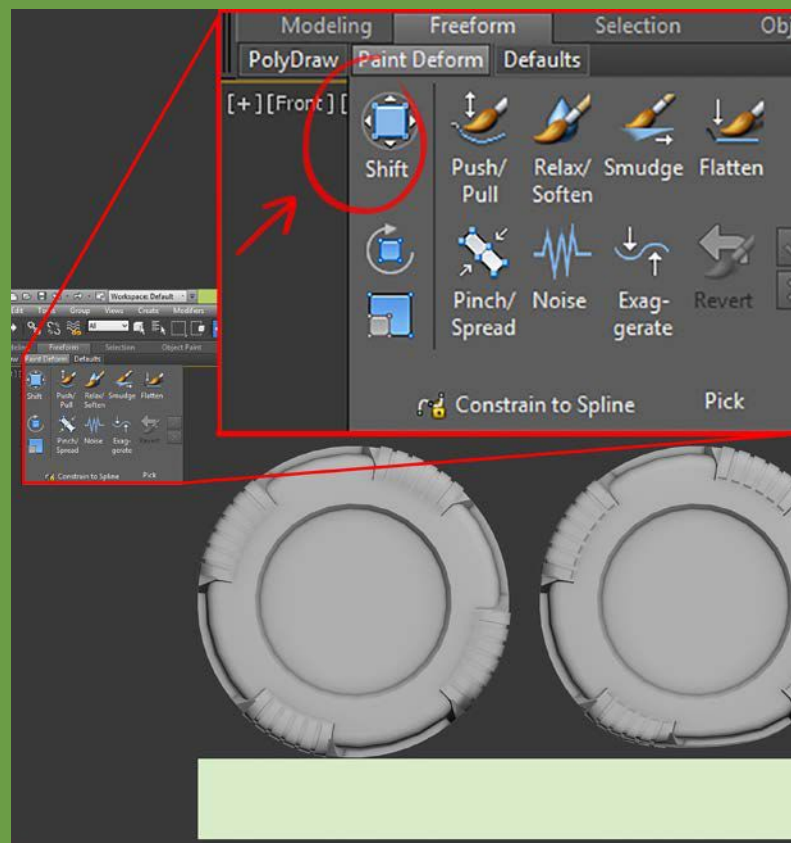
Start by segmenting the bigger panels, cutting into them, and adding some new shapes. You can be neat or untidy with this, depending on how much time you have or how you like to work. Keep it loose at this stage and plan to tidy the messier bits later on with more painting and photo textures. ►

- 08** Even just a few textures can provide details to improve upon to direct the viewer's gaze
- 09** Separate elements into layers to make them easy to manage, then set the initial mood for the scene
- 10** The first detail pass really helps to establish the design, making a solid base to work on

## ⚡ PRO TIP Simple, subtle, believable detail

3ds Max has something called the Shift tool (Ctrl+Shift+X) which is similar to Photoshop's Liquify tool. It can be used for awesome results, such as deforming the tires to look as if they are reacting to the truck's immense weight.

Simply make your object an Editable Poly by selecting the object and choosing Editable Poly from the Modify panel. Once you have done this an option will appear under the Freeform tab, called Paint Deform. Hover over that to bring up a second window and Shift is in the top left. In the image you can see that I have pushed the rubber tire up and out slightly to add an extra level of realism to my model.



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**11 Building the prison:** The best way to make any building feel convincing is to use elements of an existing architectural style. This gives your image the feeling of solidity and it can greatly enhance your designs. For this image I choose a texture from a Baroque church for my prison entrance because I want something that feels strong, imposing, and has a slightly decorative look. There is just enough detail in the texture to add to the scene but not take the main focus away from the prison transport vehicle.

**12 Painting the truck:** Now it is time to start photo-bashing and refining my earlier sketch lines. The reference materials you use are key as I explain in the pro tips. Start off by covering over the larger areas such as the wheels, prisoner-transfer crane, doors, headlights, and chassis. When using photos it is important to pick ones with similar lighting to your scene otherwise it can make your final painting look inconsistent.

To tie everything together, add a subtle dirt layer using an appropriate brush. To do this create a new layer and change the blending mode to Soft Light, then pick a suitable brown and build up the dirt where you think it might collect in real life. As change is good I also decide to swap the sky for a more interesting dusky sky. Swapping the bland, miserable sky for something with a little more interest greatly improves this painting.



12

**13 Adding a scale reference:** I'll be the first to admit that I struggle to paint people, but as they are really useful for establishing scale and narrative I have found a good way to cheat.

By using a "donor image" you can overlay a photo reference to create a base on which to paint. Here I cut out a few robot limbs from a DARPA robotics photo pack, line them up, then use the sketching techniques from before to make a simple cyborg prison guard.

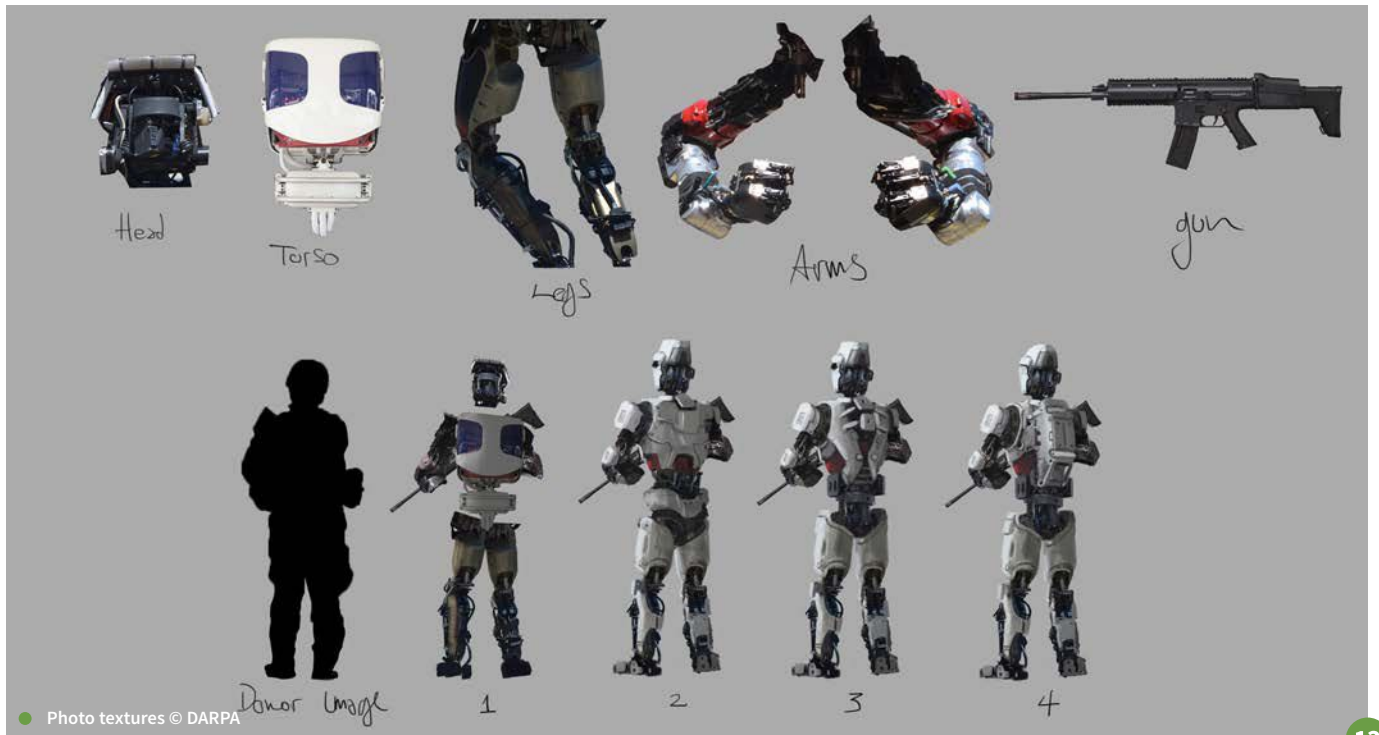
I do a little more cheating, by cutting the cyborg into pieces and reassembling them over more

"donor images." Then I paint over the cyborg using the same thumbnail technique as earlier in the process, and I soon have my scale references.

**14 Fine details and major changes:** Decals and small accents of color are a good way build up detail and they also help to make the overall color palette richer. I choose orange and highlight a few areas of interest such as access panels, hinges, and controls.

Paste in some stickers to make the vehicle look authentic. I find that cranes, garbage trucks, and construction vehicles are a great source for these.





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Bigger changes can also be made, such as the new photo-bashed and painted guard tower. Here you can appreciate another advantage of using 3D for your artwork: re-rendering the scene with a cylinder in place so that it is perfectly aligned with the new section.

**15 The final color pass:** I like to use a few different, subtle methods of finalizing in the last stage. Use a couple of gradients on various blending modes, followed by a few value tweaks to bring out the most important areas. Then add a High Pass (Filter > Other > High Pass)

to pick out some small details, and add a Noise layer. Make a new layer and use the Marquee tool to make a box in the middle of the image, about a quarter of the size of my painting. Fill this with 50% gray then go to Filter > Noise > Add Noise, then set the Amount to 5, and select Gaussian and Monochromatic. Finally, resize the layer to cover the canvas, and change the blending mode to Overlay on 20% Opacity. ●

**11 Sketch in detail on the building and use photo textures to quickly add decorative elements**

**12 Paint over the truck model and add details such as dirt with a brush and blend mode for realism**

**13 Using images as a base to build photo textures and painting on top is an easy way to evolve designs**

**14 There is nothing wrong with admitting a mistake and replacing an element such as the guard tower in this image**







## The Artist



**Nick Foreman**

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kilo\\_three](https://artstation.com/artist/kilo_three)



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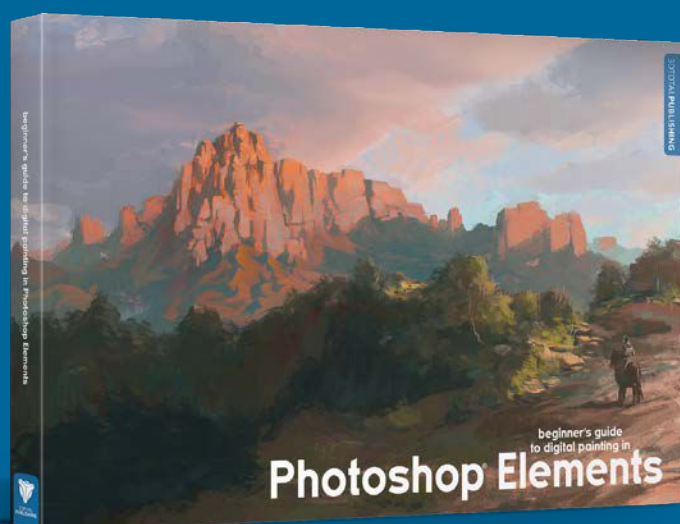


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# Paint an organic alien city

Illustrator Florent Llamas demonstrates how to paint a detailed sci-fi scene with a natural style and a balanced composition ▶





## The Artist



**Florent Llamas**

[florentllamas.tumblr.com](http://florentllamas.tumblr.com)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Florent Llamas is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Nîmes, France. His works include impressive sci-fi landscape scenes and dramatic action shots for the games industry.



## Discover how Florent creates a pleasingly balanced scene...

In this tutorial I'm going to show you how to paint an organic alien city. I am fascinated by environments and science fiction, so with this topic I will be able to show you how most of my paintings are produced. The process I am going to cover here is typically how I work for clients every day.

Like most of my artworks, I am going to start with some black and white sketches, spending only about ten or fifteen minutes on each, just to find interesting ideas and develop my imagination. The main word I will focus on for these sketches will be "organic." Then I am going to work on the storytelling within the composition and add mood and color, with the help of references.

Later in the process I will use photos and textures to increase the speed of production, and thus have a more realistic and attractive image. Finally, I will finish with the addition of the last details like lights and characters. I hope that you will find this tutorial interesting, so let's start!

**01 Sketch and silhouettes:** Every time you begin a new project, always start with a simple sketch to find a composition, or just an idea. For this kind of painting, start by painting some shapes everywhere in the canvas and just try to redefine your idea for the city.

## PRO TIP Reference files

You can easily search the internet for royalty free images to use in your work. Take your time looking as it will help you to find inspiration and return to your work with new ideas. I use images to find inspiration and to add details to my image.

The images here are from [www.freetextures.3dtotal.com](http://www.freetextures.3dtotal.com) and [www.photobash.org](http://www.photobash.org). You can also simply search on Google images for inspiration. I advise you before starting a project to create a reference file that will allow you to find inspiration and to save time later. Think about the mood, atmosphere, colors, and lighting of the images. All these elements could be used in your work.





I think about organic shapes, and how an organic environment can look chaotic, so I just experiment to see what happens. Then I add some quick details such as antennas and cables to make the thumbnails more refined, and in this case, signify an organic city.

**02 The rule of thirds:** After selecting one of the thumbnails, you now need to concentrate on the composition. The formation of shapes means that this image can be read from left to right. I decide to work in the rule of thirds which is where the lines converge, and add a platform which for me is the central element of the composition.

Moreover the large building in the background closes the composition and brings the reader back to the left of the picture, where the reading direction restarts. This point is very important. The story of the image is defined and all the principal aspects are done.

**03 Clean and define:** We now want to be able to define more accurately the different levels of the image, adding a bit of atmosphere between each plane to separate them. The plane furthest into the distance should be the lightest and the closest plane should be the darkest.

Add some details at this point but nothing significant and define the forms of each building a little more. This finalizes the first part of the process. You want to clean your Photoshop file too so make one layer for each plane, which will be more convenient in later steps.

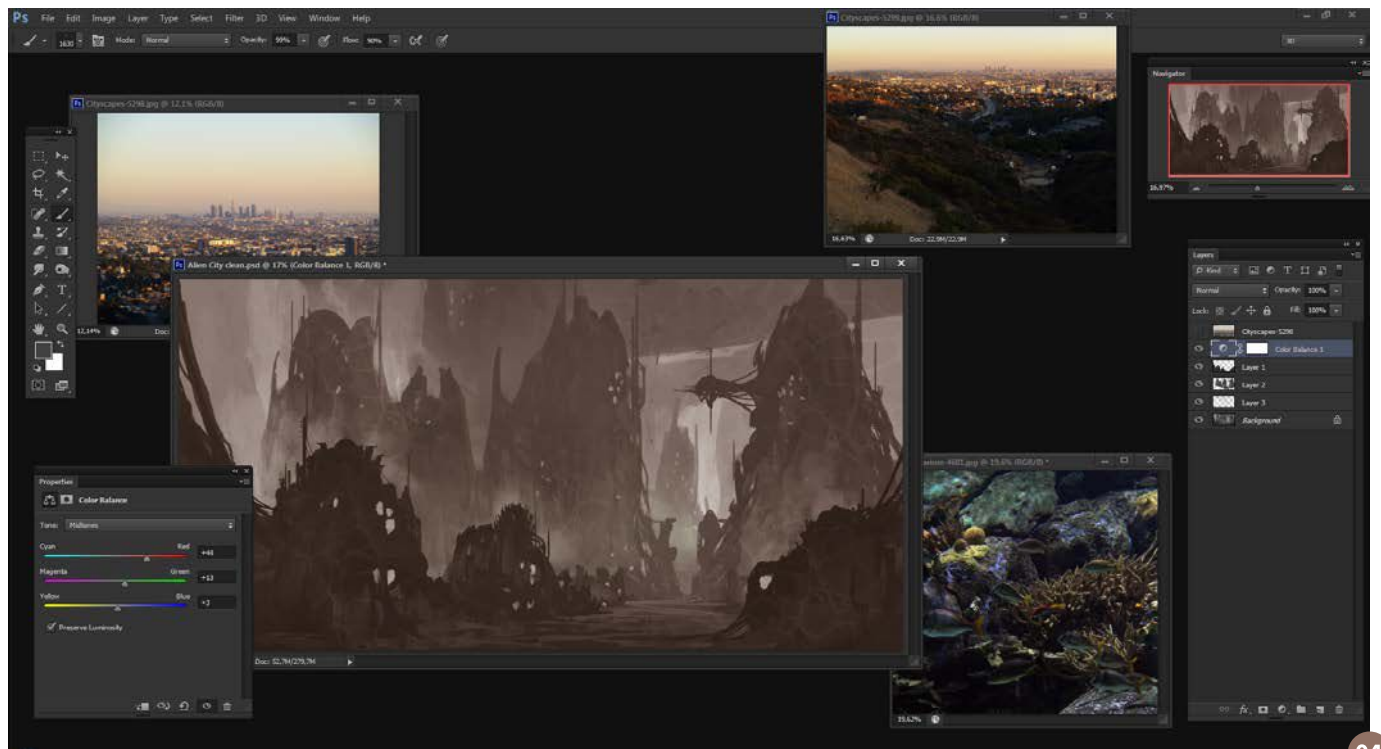


**04 Choose the mood:** It is now time to choose the mood of the image so I start to research photographs. For this research I mostly select images of cities, but they could be anything so I also use an aquarium image because of its colors. The most important aspects of the images are that they have the colors and atmosphere you want. ►

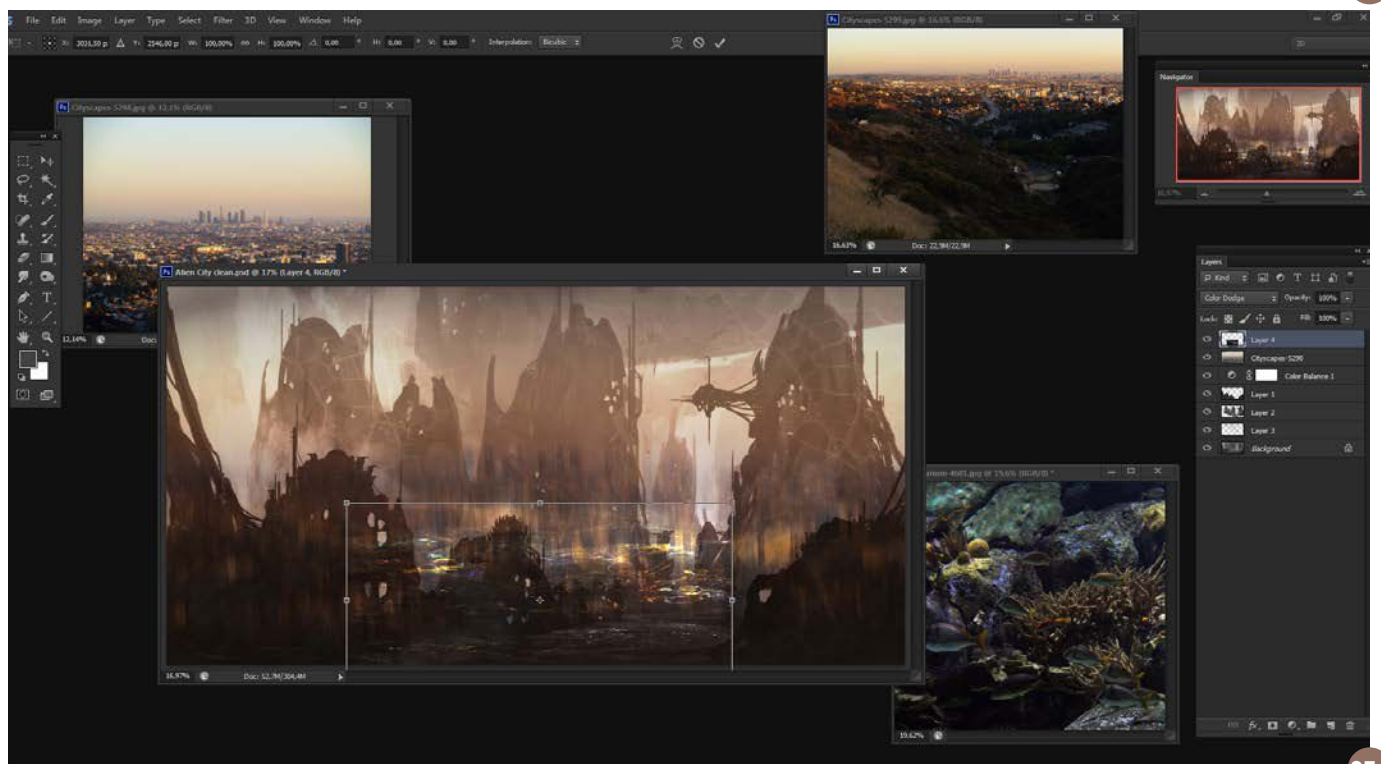
- 01** Block minimal shapes to explore ideas
- 02** Use the rule of thirds to locate a focal element
- 03** Separate the different planes and add more details to clean the shape







04



05a

**“Exploring colors in this way can also bring imaginative ideas for the rest of the image. It is used widely, allows you to get atmospheric results quickly, and it is a good basis for further work”**

Start to play with Color Balance to find a base color using images from [www.freetextures.3dtotal.com](http://www.freetextures.3dtotal.com) where there are very

good resources. Many artists also share their image bank for free or for a small fee, or you can get royalty free photo packs from sites like [www.photobash.org](http://www.photobash.org).

**05 Add more color:** In this step, import your selected images to save time in the color process. Have fun with each image adapting them with the layer blending modes, and when you find an interesting effect, move on to the next image. This is very chaotic but interesting as

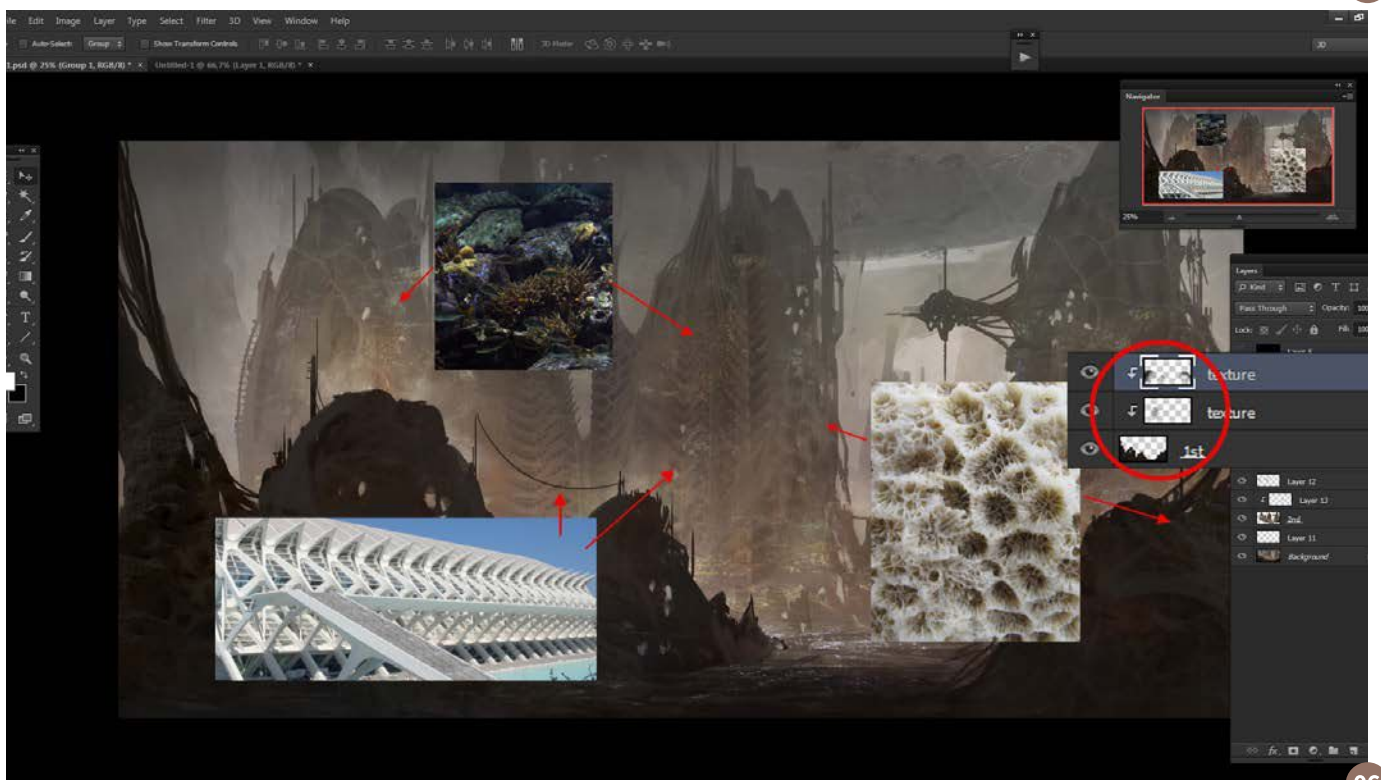
a way of working and makes finding interesting colors easy.

Exploring colors in this way can also bring imaginative ideas for the rest of the image. It is used widely, allows you to get atmospheric results quickly, and it is a good basis for further work. Don't be afraid to go back or delete images if they do not look good. The most important thing is to find the main colors and mood that you want.





05b



06

**06 Texture integration:** It is now time to add texture to the image. For this, I select images or parts of images from my reference file. Place your chosen texture on a new layer above the layer that you want to be affected (hold the Alt key between two layers to bind the texture layer below).

Repeat the process as many times as you want, choosing new textures and playing with blending modes. You can also adjust the opacity of the texture if it is too strong, or erase some areas

as you want. In this case, I choose some coral images for the organic side as well as a modern architecture building, which agrees very well with the design I want.

**07 Check the values:** At this stage of the process you need to check the values. When you add textures with different blending modes, you can change the values a lot.

To easily check the values, create a new layer in black, and change the blending mode to ►

**04** Define the mood of the image and research photos for inspiration

**05a** Add colors with photos to save time, and experiment with different blending modes

**05b** The atmosphere is quickly enhanced and the final mood is established

**06** Add texture for a realistic look or to add some cool shape into the silhouettes



Saturation or Color. Now you can see if the values are correct or not. If you see that the texture is too dark you can easily change it at this stage. You can also create a new layer in between planes, for example in between the foreground and the mid-ground, to add more depth.

**08 Paint details:** You can now go back to painting again. Using a simple brush from Photoshop's default set, create a new layer, and start to paint. What you should try to do is merge the elements together, so in this case I follow the shapes of the textures.

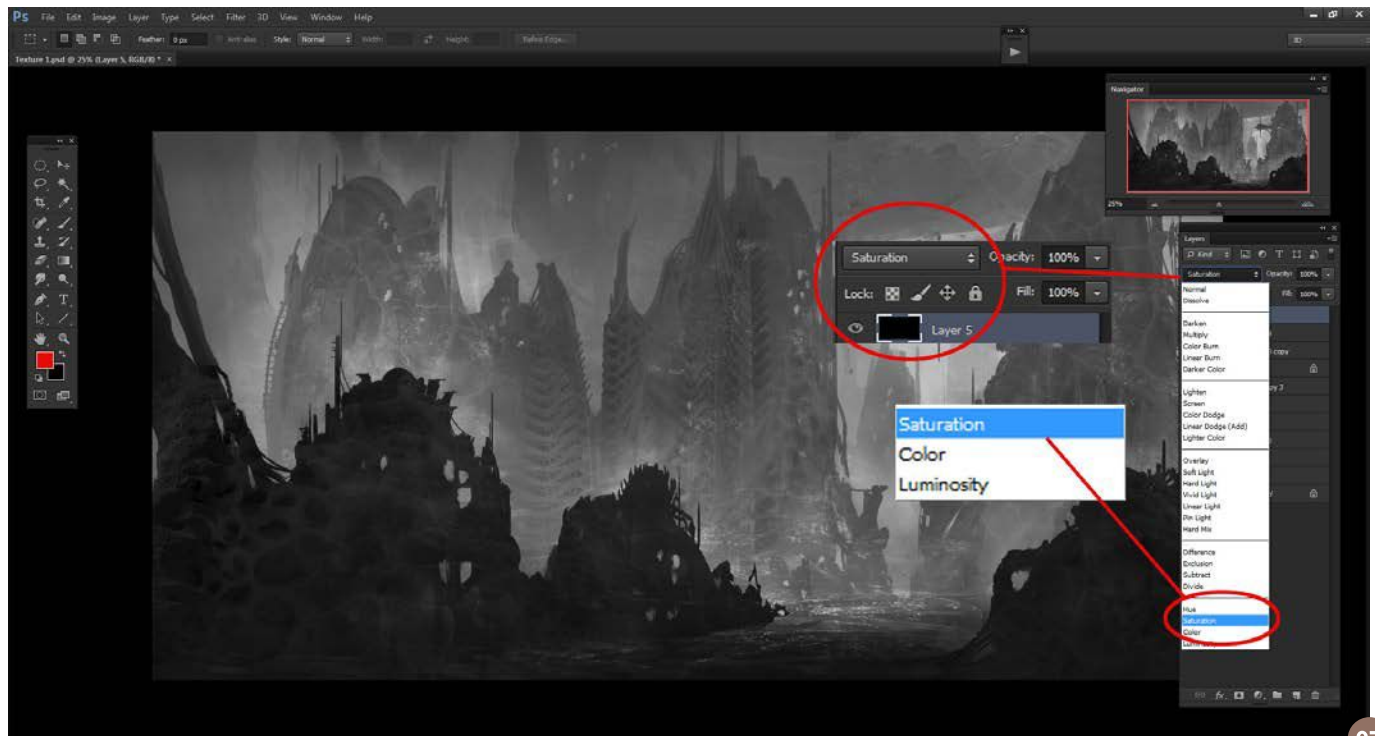
Add new little buildings between the foreground and mid-ground plane and define more clearly the shapes of the larger buildings. Add some little cables too and define the background some more with a big organic shape inspired by the buildings. At this point the design is almost done.

**09 Add light and mood:** Now you need to add lights to the city. For this you can use a very simple but fast and efficient method. First, import an image of a building at night. The picture I use comes from [www.freetextures.3dtotal.com](http://www.freetextures.3dtotal.com). Then select the layer

mode Lighten and place the image at a point where you want light, then change the levels of the image to adjust the lights to suit your scene.

Repeat the process as many times as you want to create a city with lots of life. At the end of the operation, merge all the light layers together to have a clean working file. I use just one picture for this painting, but you could use several different images if you wanted.

**10 Add more details:** The image is now nearing completion so it is time to add



07



08



the final details. For this, create a new layer and just start painting. In my scene I add some small details wherever I think they will be beneficial, but I am more focused on the foreground which is an important part of the picture.

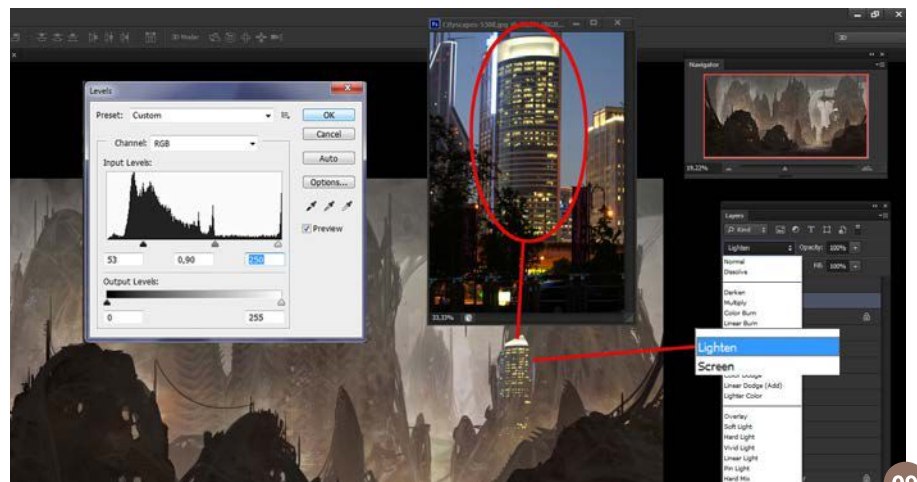
Add more organics details and work on the light and atmosphere with a Color Dodge layer. I decide to add a little more light between the buildings, again with the Color Dodge layer mode. The image is now almost finished.

**11 Add some life:** It is now time to add some signs of life to the picture. For this I decide to add a few figures in the foreground. I imagine these characters to be in full discussion and I add their antennas to show their alien side. If you are struggling to paint characters do not hesitate to seek poses on the internet. You can also quickly take some photos of yourself in different poses.

I also decide to add a ship moored to the platform at the main focal point of the image. This will add to the storytelling in the image and help the reader to imagine what the rest of this alien world is like.

**12 The last adjustment:** Now that the image is almost finished merge all the layers into a new layer (Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E) and make a few adjustments. Create a Color Balance layer to test other color variants then try adding a bit of blue in the image, which adds some contrast and makes the image less red.

I eventually create a new layer in which I add Noise and reduce the Opacity to around 10-15%. This helps to merge the colors and painted elements. I also add an element in the upper left corner of the image to close the scene and add a more organic element. ●



09



10

**07** Checking values is important for texture integration and shows if more depth is needed between planes

**08** Work on adding details and polishing the buildings

**09** Use a night city image to create lighting quickly

**10** Polish the image using Color Dodge to bring it closer to completion

**11** Add characters and a ship to enhance the storytelling in the scene



11







## The Artist



**Florent Llamas**  
[florentllamas.tumblr.com](http://florentllamas.tumblr.com)



LLAMAS 2016



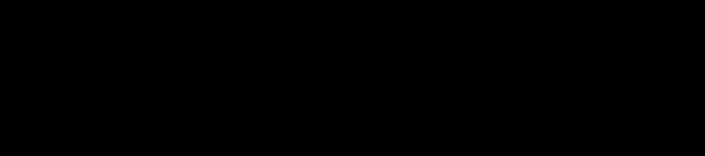
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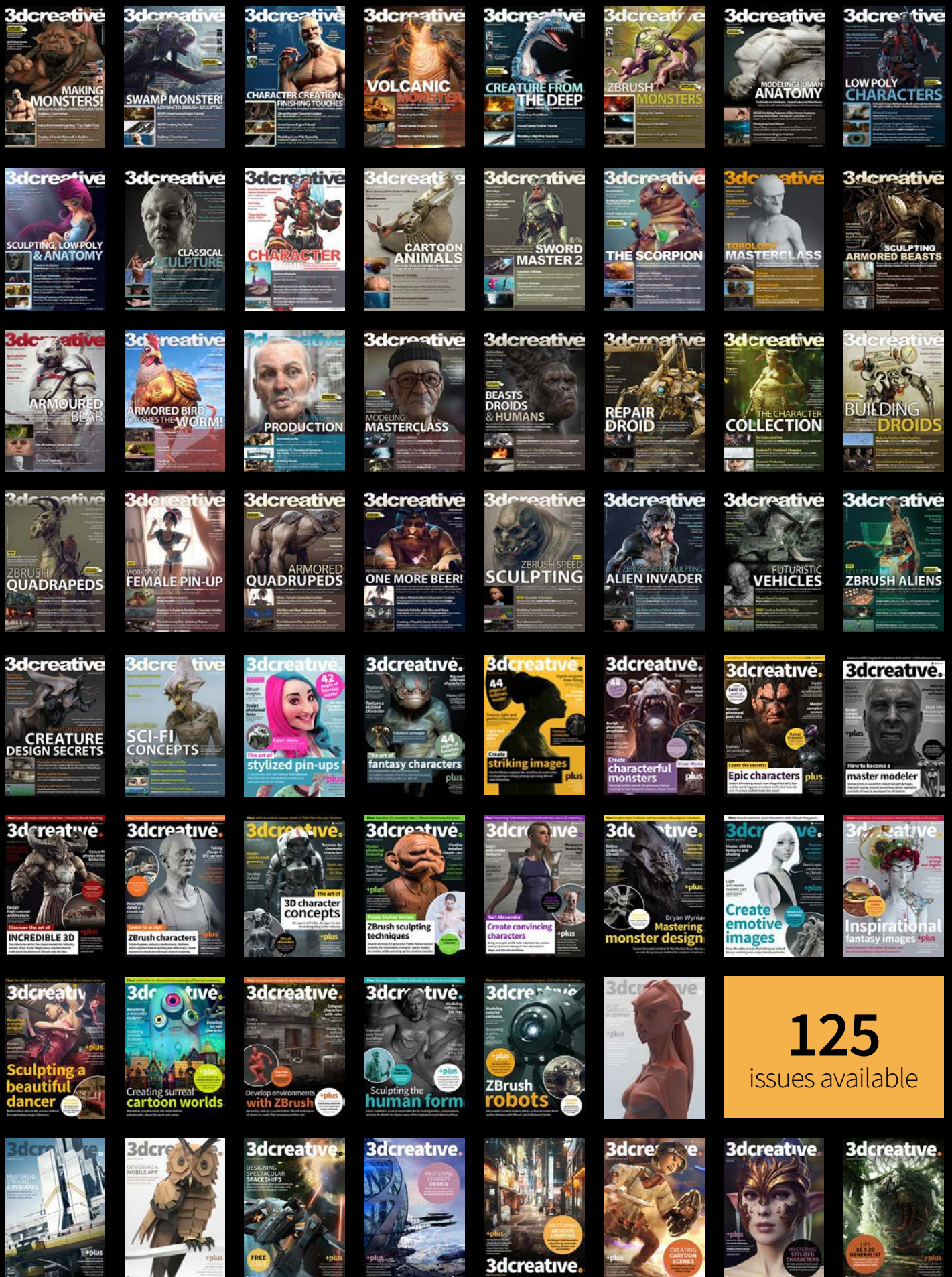
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## FREE RESOURCES

Brushes

### The Artist



**Rudy Siswanto**

[artstation.com/artist/cruz](http://artstation.com/artist/cruz)

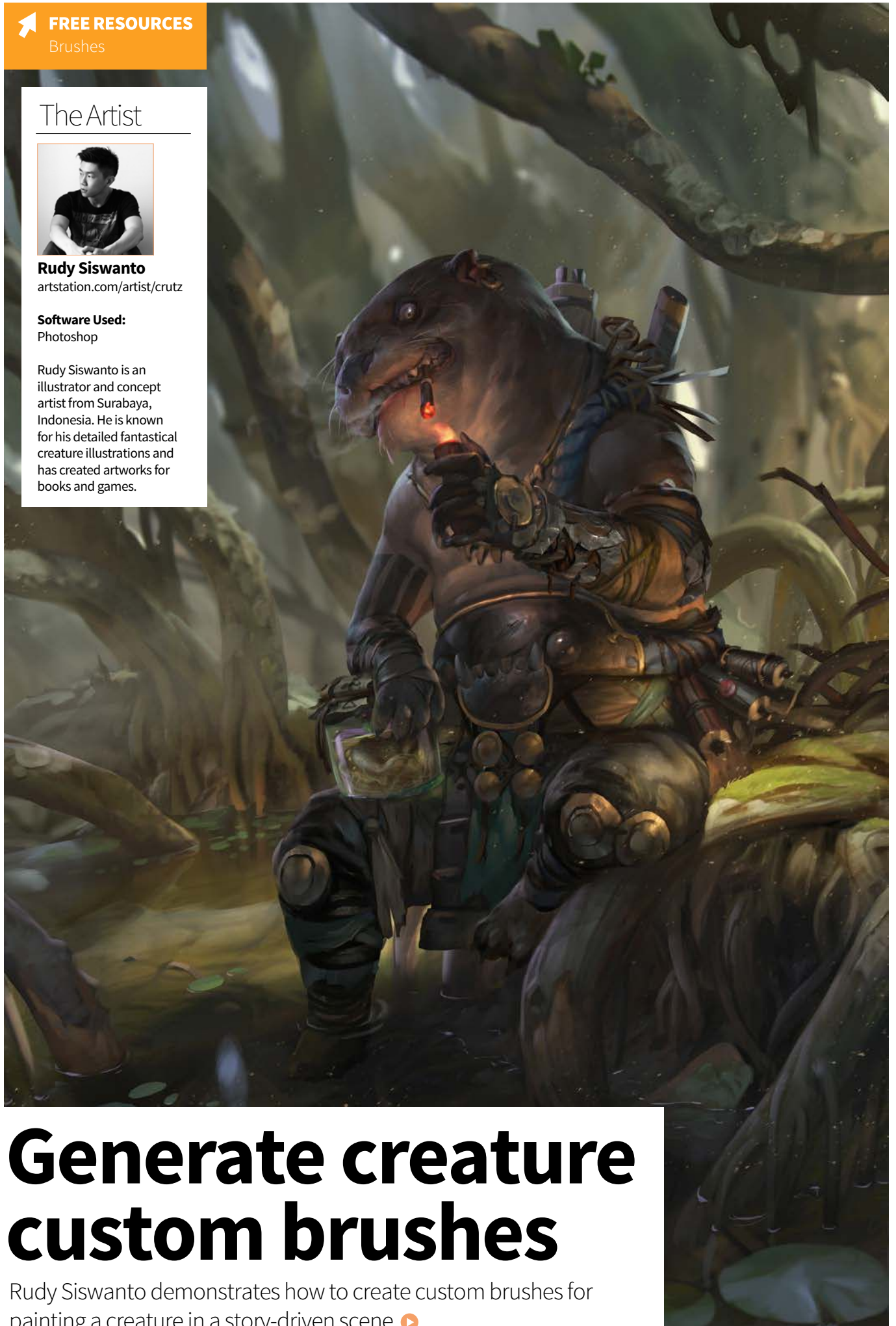
**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Rudy Siswanto is an illustrator and concept artist from Surabaya, Indonesia. He is known for his detailed fantastical creature illustrations and has created artworks for books and games.

# Generate creature custom brushes

Rudy Siswanto demonstrates how to create custom brushes for painting a creature in a story-driven scene 





## See how creating brushes for specific purposes can speed up your process...

Animals and creatures heavily inspire my work. Their unique characteristics are always fascinating to me. I also love to tell stories through my illustrations. That is why I always try to create story-driven images with creatures in them. In this particular piece, I would like to tell a story about a bounty hunter otter that is currently relaxing after finishing his latest job. I picked an otter because I imagined the character to be an agile and highly intellectual animal. I am also lucky enough to have a friend who owns an otter as a pet so I am excited to be able to observe it directly.

Otters are active animals; I also feel like their appearance would work well for a protagonist character. This is why I think an otter will fit the role in my illustration. In order to create this piece in an effective and efficient way, I will use custom brushes; I will show you how to create these brushes so that you can create your own.

**01 Rough thumbnails:** I tend to start a piece with a story in mind and then begin to sketch several thumbnails. Thumbnails are a great way to develop general ideas for your paintings, such as the composition and focal points. The first thumbnail usually looks fairly



01

unremarkable but after several thumbnails I begin to see which ones I like, and which I don't.

At this stage, don't dive into details; merely focus on bigger shapes. Your goal is to make those shapes as readable as possible, as fast as possible. Once you have found one thumbnail that you like the most, continue to the next step, developing it into a tighter sketch. I use a custom sketch brush for this stage.

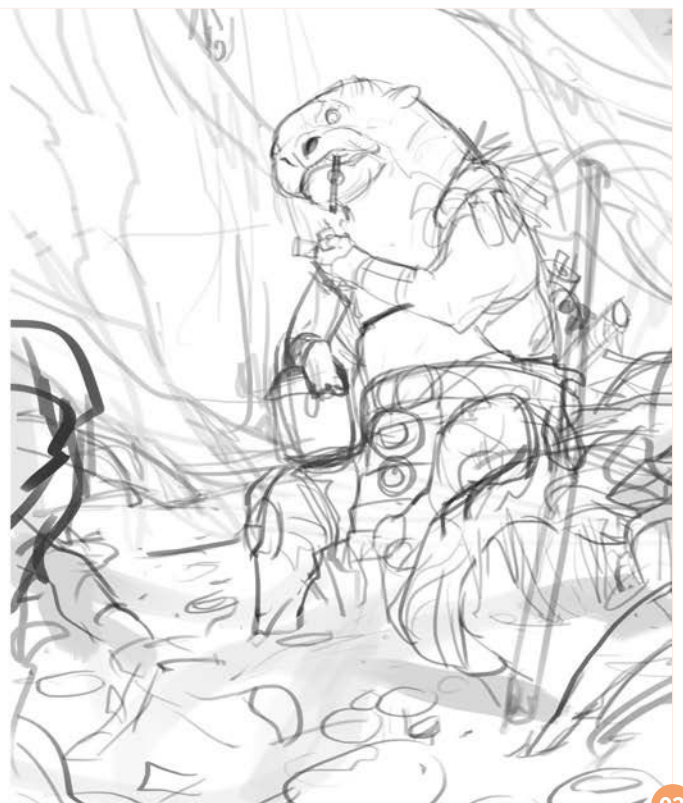
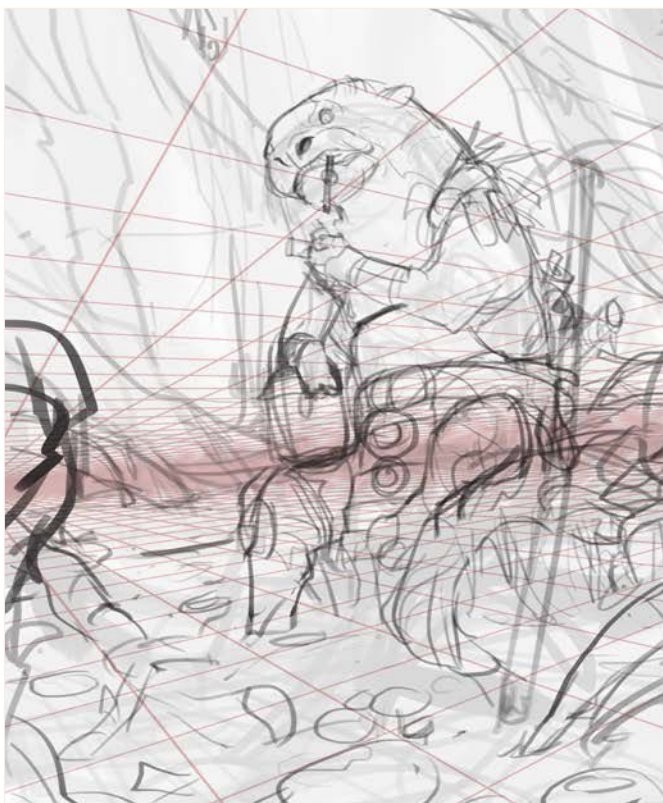
To create a custom sketch brush, open the Brush Presets panel and make sure a default brush is selected. Turn on Shape Dynamics, Transfer, and Smoothing, making sure everything is set to Pen Pressure. Then play with the settings sliders to get the desired effect.

In my opinion this brush is a better option for sketching than a regular round brush, since this brush has a more dynamic line weight.

**02 Tightening the sketch:** Once you have found the best composition from the thumbnails you made in step 01, set the chosen thumbnail at a lower opacity and then create a new layer to draw on top of it. ▶

**01 Sketch as many thumbnails as you can to develop ideas you never knew you had**

**02 Applying a perspective grid will help to make elements more believable**



02



After applying a layer with a perspective grid (you can create a grid using Vanishing Point under the Filter menu), start to define the overall shapes and design of the elements within the painting using the sketch brush you created, only this time set it at a smaller scale.

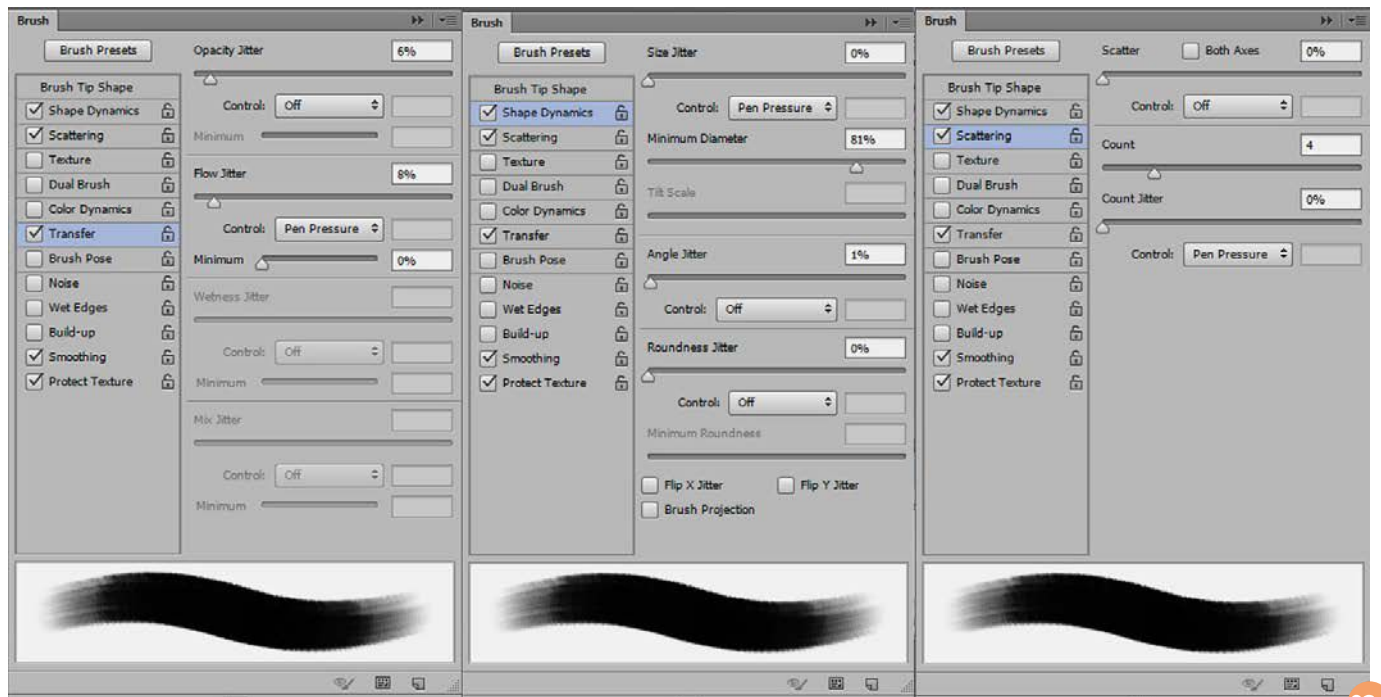
I make sure to add elements that support my story, so I don't add unnecessary features that might clutter the illustration. I also begin to define and separate the foreground, mid-ground, and background from each other. In this step, avoid zooming in too close, since you don't want to become trapped in detailing the image too early on at this point.

**03 Value staging and basic lighting:** Once the sketch is established, begin to separate the background, mid-ground, and foreground using a single value for each. Make sure you separate those values onto different layers and experiment with lighting scenarios, continuing to use simple values (image 03a).

I start using a custom impression brush here, which I make by taking a photo of a rock that has an interesting-looking texture. Apply a Threshold level of 117 under Image > Adjustments > Threshold to extract its texture. After this, select parts of the photograph that are interesting using the Quick Selection tool, and make it into a preset

brush by going to Edit > Define Brush Preset. After it has saved, the brush will show up in the Brush Presets panel. Then adjust the settings as shown in image 03b. You want to achieve a painterly effect with this brush, which will be great to use to block in big shapes quickly with some textures incorporated. Don't forget to save by hitting the folded square icon in the bottom-right corner of the panel.

Since I always paint with a story in mind, when I am deciding which lighting is best I ask myself, "Is this the best lighting to help sell the story of this painting?" I pick the second lighting scenario (far right on image 03a) because I want this painting



03a



03b



to have a slight sense of mystery. Placing the spotlight on the body here means the audience will look to the face after first looking at the body of the character.

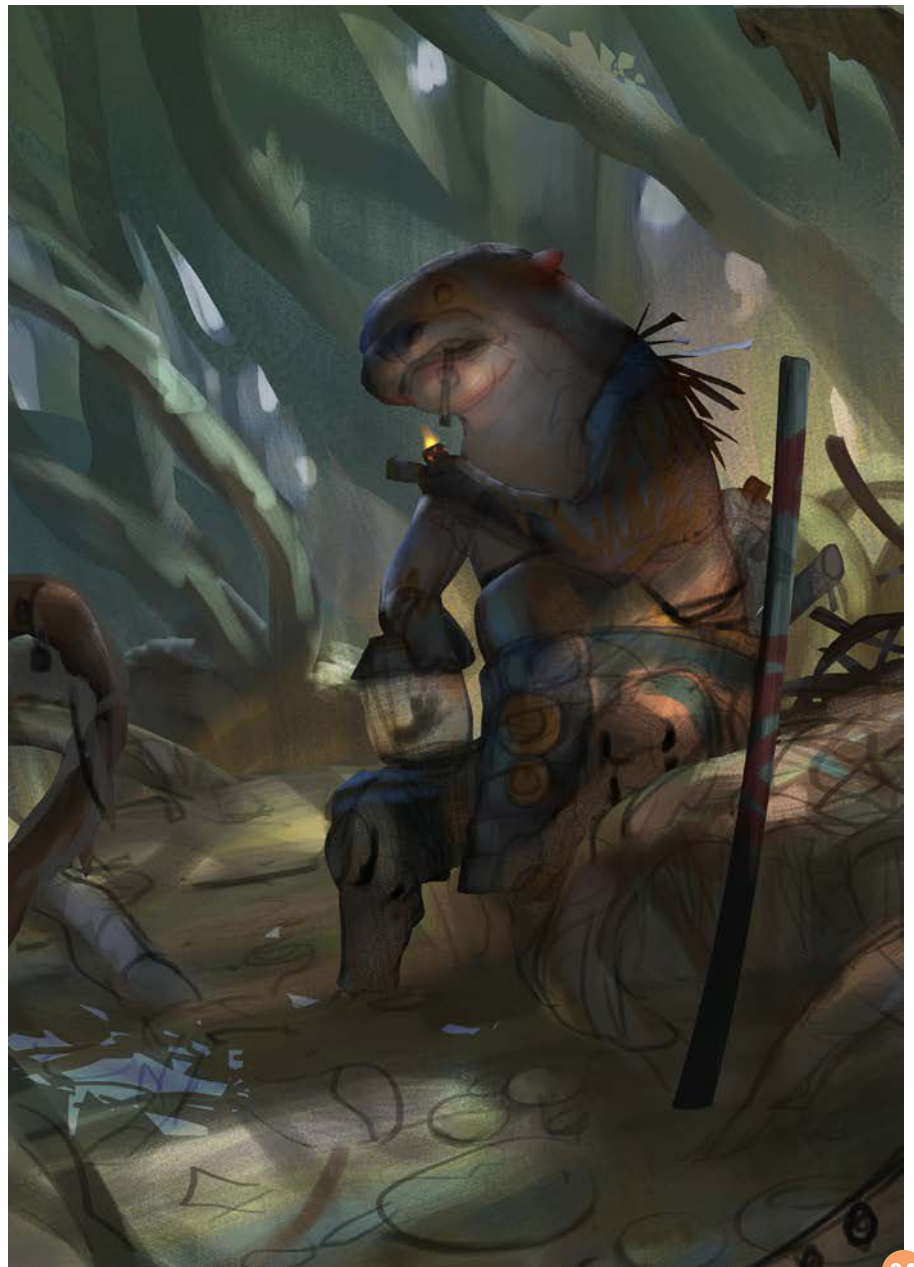
**04 Applying rough colors:** The next step is to apply some rough colors to the illustration. Create another layer on top of each layer stage, and set each new layer to Multiply. By working on separate layers, not only will my painting be more organized, it will also be easier for me to paint over the color base using opaque paint in later steps.

Pick a cool green-blue hue for the environment, and use a warmer color for the character and the light. This will help to separate the character from the environment.

**05 Developing the environment:** I usually paint the background first as it gives me the liberty to adjust the characters according to their surroundings. I have found that working on the environment first also gives me more control over the lighting scenario on the character.

We need to create some depth in this piece so make several selections using the Lasso tool, and set Feather to 5 pixels – you don't want the edges to be too crisp. After this, introduce atmosphere by adding a cool blue hue with the Radial Gradient tool.

Moving on from the background, begin to render the mid-ground. The mid-ground needs to be defined early so that the position of the character in the mid-ground will be clear. You also want to create a smooth transition between the background and the mid-ground, as you don't want them to feel too "staged" and separated from each other. Continue using the impression brush for all of this. ▶



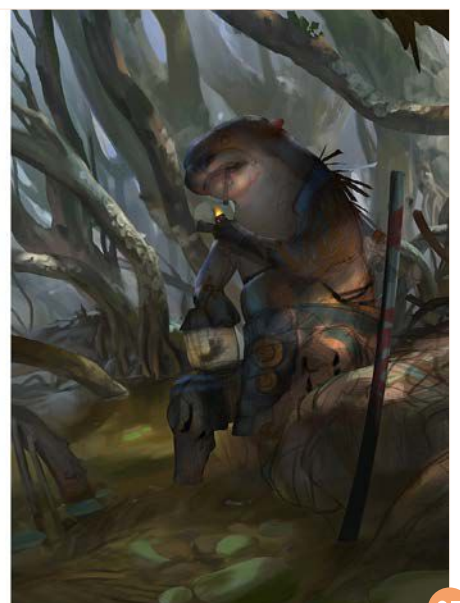
04

**03a** Don't go too dark or too bright when establishing your base lighting. Use three to five values to keep it simple

**03b** The brush settings used to create a painterly effect for the impression brush

**04** Use Multiply to explore and establish colors to separate characters from the environment

**05** Using the Lasso tool and the Radial Gradient tool to add atmosphere to the environment in order to create depth



05









07a

**“This is the part that I find the most enjoyable: begin to render the character and define most of its design elements”**

**06 Defining the focal area:** Moving forward, start to tackle the focal area. I make the staff on the right side of the image invisible because I want to render the focal area with a higher level of detail. Use a lot of references when you paint the water plants, branches, and elements that are underwater. References are so important to me; they make my paintings much more believable.

Apply the perspective grid once more when you are painting the lotus leaves to help give depth to the image. I reduce the amount of atmosphere in the background now after realizing that it actually distracts from my framing, since it is too bright. Once I have toned it down using my brush set to Darken with a darker color, I feel that the framing is much better.

**07 Rendering the character:** This is the part that I find the most enjoyable: begin



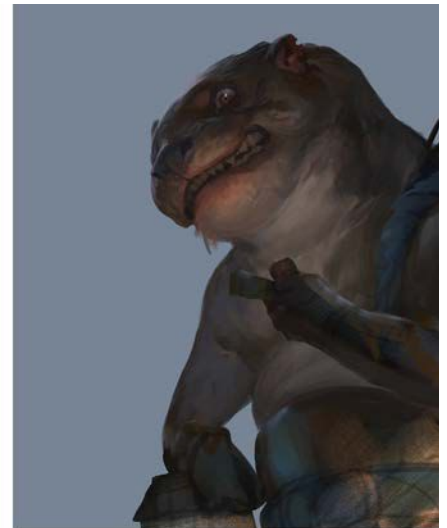
to render the character and define most of its design elements. Turn off the background so that you will not be distracted by it. However, turn it on at times to check how well the character works with its surroundings.

I create a new custom brush for this step which I call the “hard edge blur” brush. Using a soft round brush, create a soft circular spot. Then use the Marquee tool to cut a soft circle in the middle.

With the Transform tool, stretch the half circle slightly upwards, and then go to Edit > Define Brush Preset, making sure to activate Shape Dynamics and set it to Pen Pressure. The result is shown in image 07a with a hard edge on one side and a soft edge the other.

Now you can get to work on the character. First, render the overall character using the impression brush. At this point again avoid zooming in. Next, add a bounce light from the environment using a bluish hue. Then start to tackle the design of the character’s outfit.

Use the hard edge blur brush to quickly shape the costume of the character. Render the design with



07b

the story in mind: this is a mercenary otter, so you have to make it look like one (image 07b).

**08 Diving into details:** Ever since the start of the tutorial I have rarely zoomed in when I paint. However, now is the time for me to do just that. Use the Actual Pixels zoom from the View menu as you paint details, as this gives you a better view of the painting without being too close. Begin rendering the small details of the costume of the otter; I am influenced by Asian armor design for this character. In order to make sharp details, I often use the Lasso tool. ▶

**06 Always treat the focal area with more detail and contrast; it is the most important part of the piece**

**07a The finished hard edge blur brush has both a soft-edged side and a hard-edged side**

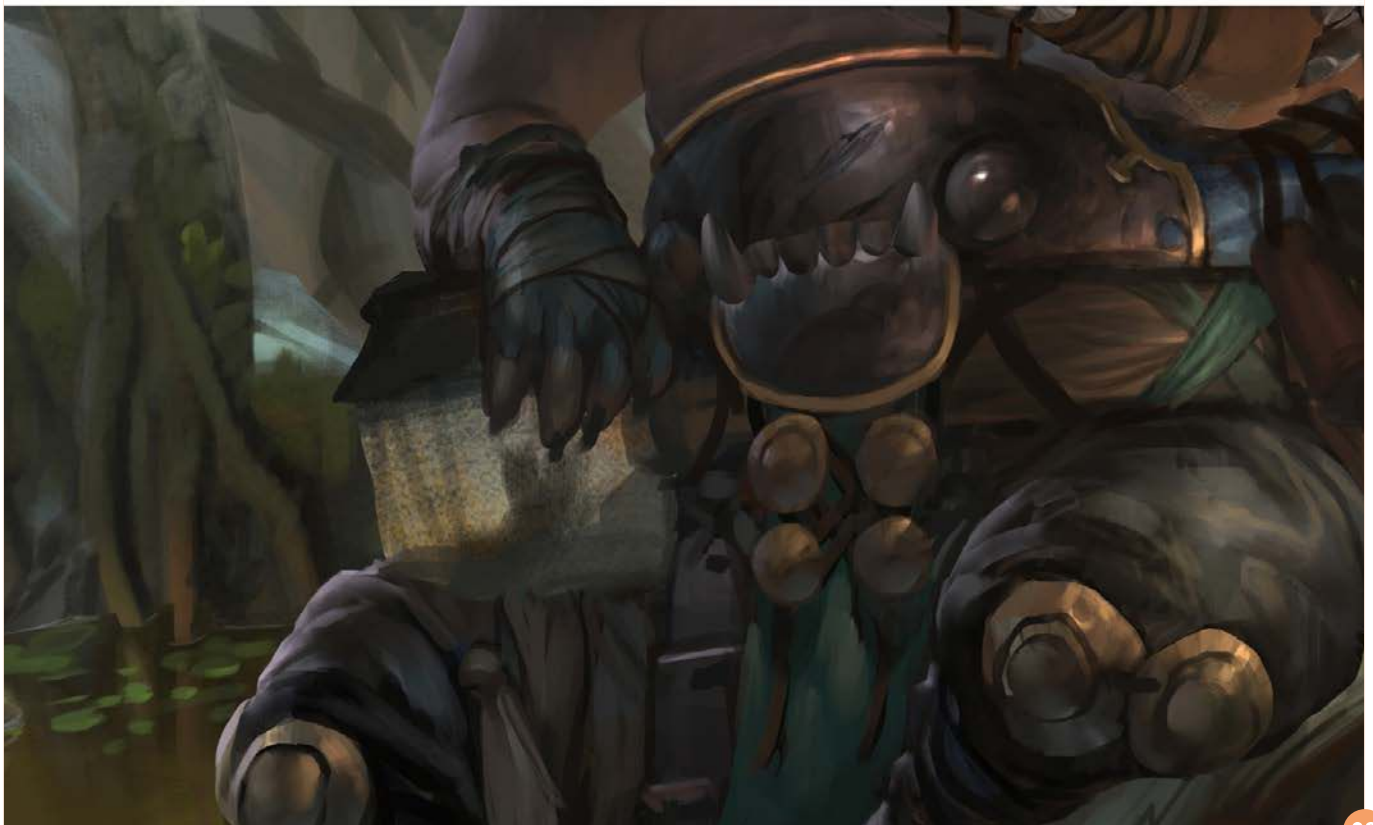
**07b Rendering the character using the impression brush and the hard edge blur brush**



**“The fur brush must be used with care; if it is used too much the image will look overwhelmed with textures, which may result in a flat-looking artwork”**

I have found that this Lasso tool really speeds up my workflow. The key to using the tool is having an understanding of shapes and silhouettes, so make sure you keep practicing these. However, be careful not to make everything sharp, as this can make the image look flat. Always make sure

the focal point is sharper than everything else. Use the hard edge blur brush again heavily here, for example to quickly paint the elements on the character's belt. I have provided the brush in the downloadable resources for this tutorial, so you can try it out for yourself.







**09** **Rendering the jar:** Begin to render the jar in the illustration using the impression brush at a smaller size. This element plays an important role within the storytelling of this piece as it is the captured prey. A preserved ginseng root inspires me as I design the prey. Combining something common with something that is less well known, such as a lotus flower

with a ginseng root, can sometimes result in something new and interesting.

I combine the shape of a ginseng, lotus, and mandrake to create a new creature. I did not plan to this, but I developed the idea along the way when I was painting the piece. Now that I have worked on it I am quite pleased with the result. ▶

**08** **Work on the costume details using the hard edge blur brush and the Actual Pixels view**

**09** **Design a new creature or object by combining aspects of commonly known objects with aspects from less commonly known objects**

09



**10** **Detailing the character:** Now begin to render the character to a polished level. Using the brushes you made earlier, switch back and forth between the impression brush and hard edge blur brush. When it comes to detailing, use the sketch brush from the first step to reach smaller spaces, such as the otter's teeth and armor pieces.

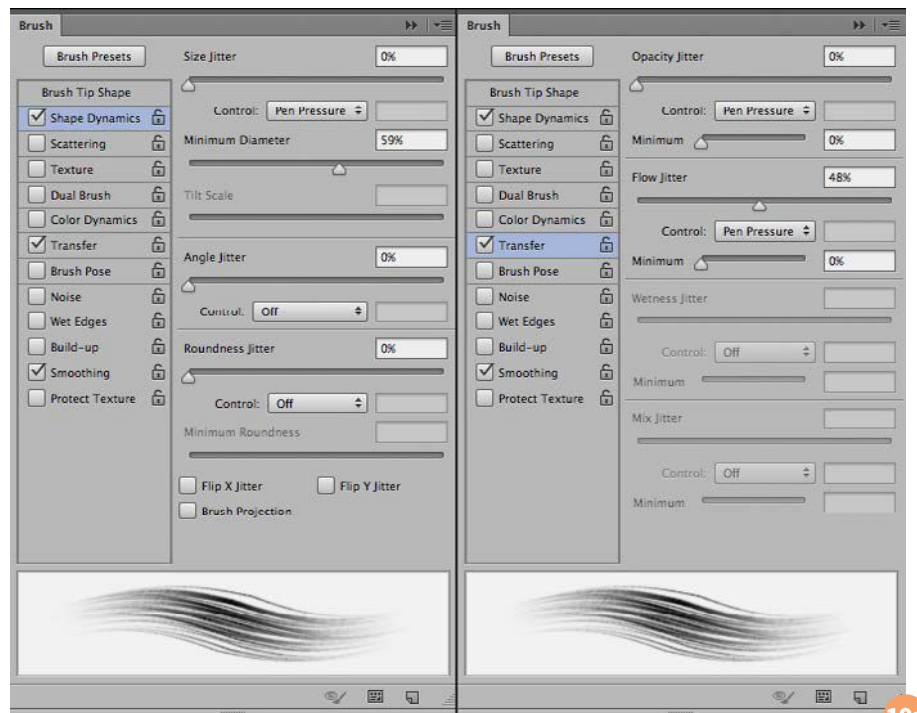
To finish the character, create a new fur brush to give the otter an authentic look. Using a round brush, create random dots that look like crumbs or speckles, and then go to Edit > Define Brush Preset. Adjust the settings as shown in image 10a with Shape Dynamics selected, Size Jitter on Pen Pressure mode, and a Minimum Diameter of 59%. Transfer is selected with both Opacity Jitter and Flow Jitter set to Pen Pressure and Flow Jitter set at 48%. Smoothing is also selected; the fur brush is ready to be used (image 10b). Note that the fur brush must be used with care; if it is used too much the image risks becoming overwhelmed with textures, which may then result in a flat-looking artwork.

**11** **Final touches:** Once you are happy with the finish on the character, turn the background layer on again and begin adding the final touches. Utilize the custom brushes you have made to create details and shapes in the background faster.

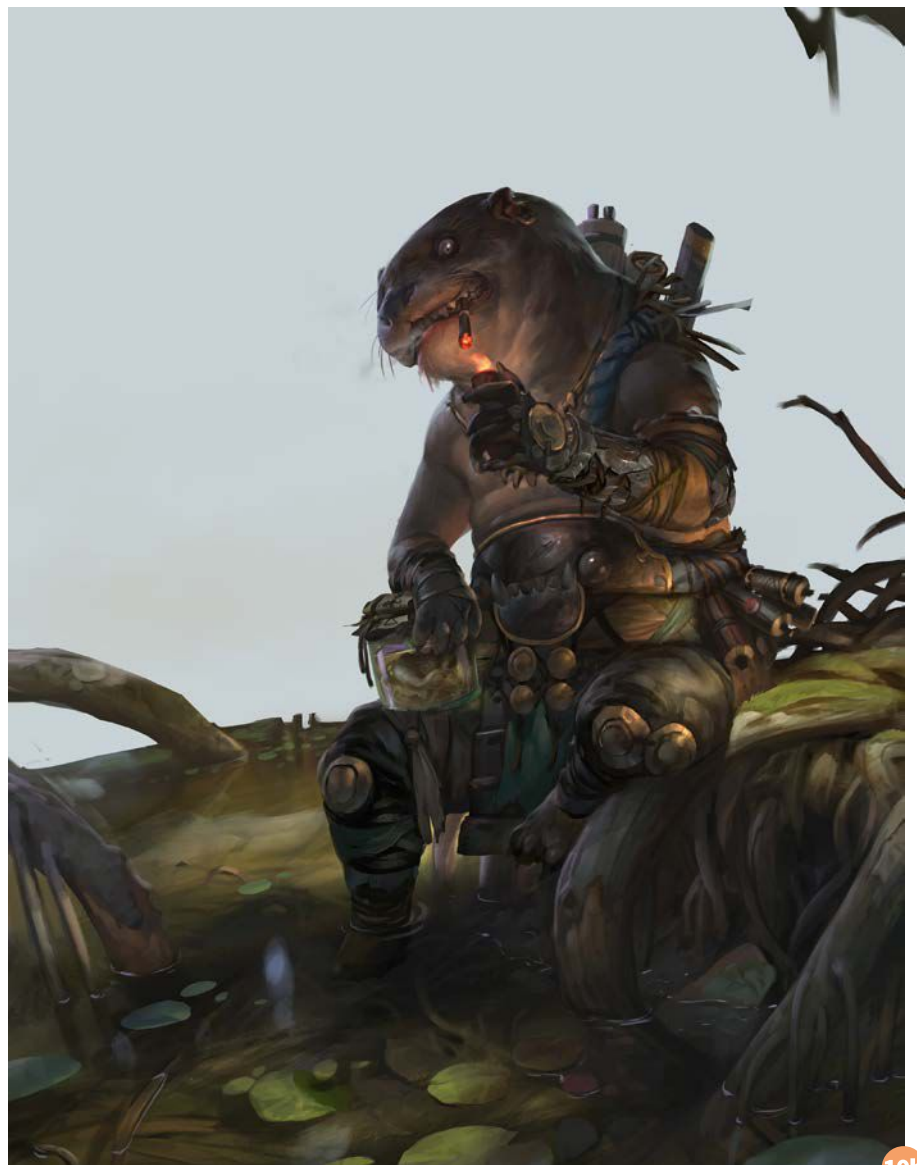
Add some details to the lighting and atmosphere, and smaller highlights on the water. Also add to the rim light using a cool color, so that the character will stand out from the background even more. Use Color Dodge to light the fire from the otter's lighter. Once you feel that the image has all the elements you want – mood, atmosphere, and storytelling – you are ready to call it complete. ●

**10a** The Brush Presets adjustments for the fur brush

**10b** The character is the focal point of the illustration so time should be taken to polish it



10a



10b



## The Artist



**Rudy Siswanto**

[artstation.com/artist/cruz](https://artstation.com/artist/cruz)







# Build a sci-fi environment in Photoshop

Discover how José Julián Londoño Calle creates an incredible sci-fi environment starting with a simple silhouette in Photoshop ▶

All images © José Julián Londoño Calle



## The Artist



**José Julián Londoño  
Calle**

[artstation.com/artist/  
handsdigitalstudio](http://artstation.com/artist/handsdigitalstudio)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

José Julián Londoño Calle is a graphic designer who has been studying concept art and matte painting since 2014. He has worked as a university lecturer in Design for the last seven years; he also works as a mentor for the Facet Visual Effects School in Mexico.



## Learn how to incorporate photo-bashing to design a sci-fi environment...

In this making of I will take you through my process of creating a sci-fi environment – starting with a flat silhouette and integrating different elements to add depth of field and bring the scene to life.

The management of perspective and leading the viewer's eye to areas of interest is very important in this creative process. I mainly used photobashing to bring together a clean and balanced composition.

**01 Exploration:** I used simple silhouettes to work out the initial composition of the piece. Although the concept is undefined and flat at this stage, I still needed to think about perspective so I used three gray values to suggest depth of field.

**02 Sketch:** I work in black and white at this stage as it allows me to focus on the shapes and not get distracted by the colors. I made regular use of the Levels (Ctrl+L) to manage the contrast and brightness, which is key for achieving good depth. I used desaturated textures and brushes to sketch in the basic forms and to help establish the light direction; using

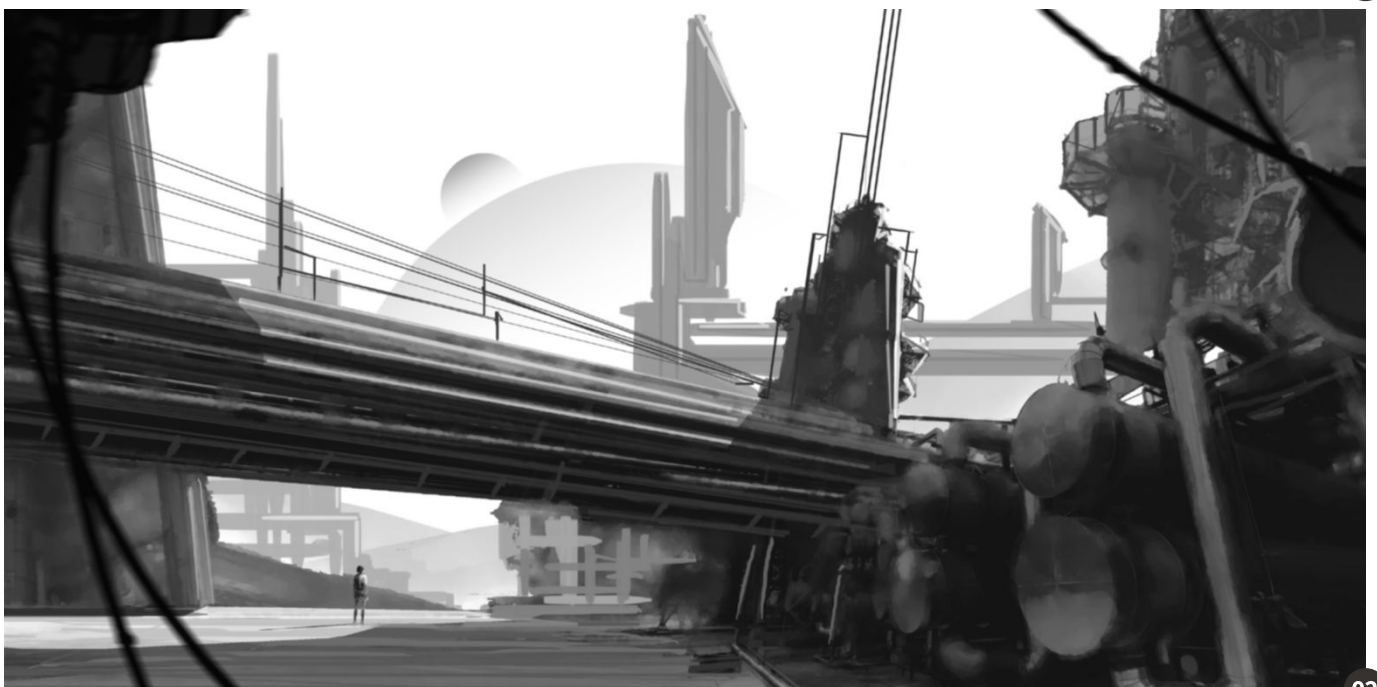
a monochrome palette allowed me to see if the composition worked.

**03 Creating the background:** To create the background I used two images – one of a sky and the other of a landscape – and worked them with a selection of brushes, as well as the History brush to achieve some realism. Additionally, I deformed the background to highlight the point of interest in the concept.

**04 Running textures and color corrections:** To build up the main structure and shapes of the focal point I selected a range of different textures from freely available



01



02





03



04

stock images. I combined the texture layer with a Layer Mask filled with black which hides the texture from view (Layer > Layer Mask > Hide All) and painted the areas where I wanted the texture to show through with white.

At the same time, I did a bit of color correcting by adjusting the levels and values of the various textures present; I tried to find the same luminosity and temperature regardless of its atmosphere and depth. ►

**01** Simple silhouettes are great for blocking in the initial composition

**02** Working in black and white stops unnecessary distractions

**03** Using real photographs for the background adds to the realism

**04** Decreasing the saturation of the textures gives more control when doing color correction

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Flipping the canvas

When working on my concepts I find it useful to occasionally flip the canvas horizontally. Doing this allows me to check that the composition works and to spot any errors.









**“This was a very important part of the process; it is about finding the color palette that best fits the concept”**

**05 Adding details:** At this stage I concentrated on the position of the various objects and details. I looked for vectors within the concept and specific locations to place the lights and sheens. I focused on generating geometric elements that gave a sense of rhythm and lead the viewer's eye around the scene to the main focal point.

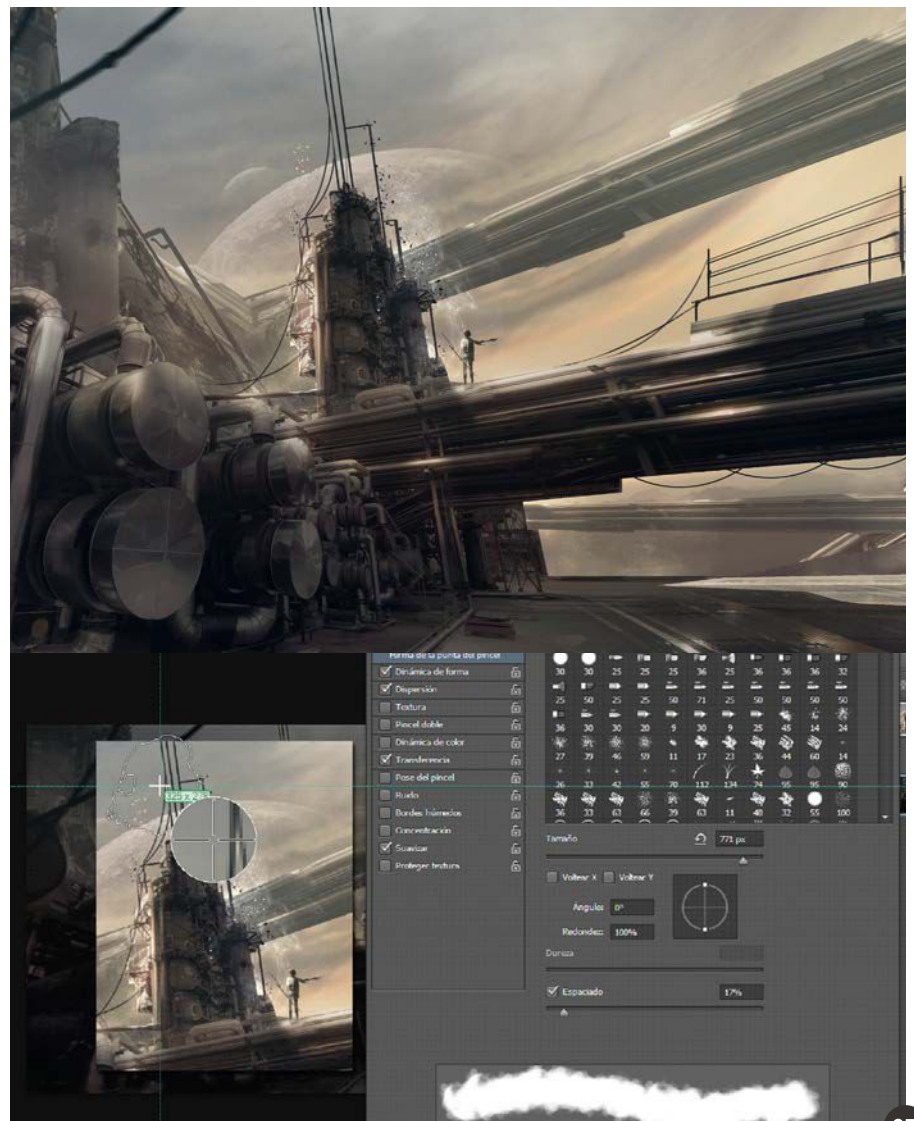
**06 General color corrections:** This was a very important part of the process; it is about finding the color palette that best fits the concept. To achieve this I used Color Balance, Color Pickup or any other tool that allowed for the manipulation of color with no deterioration or loss of information. It is important to have movement in the image: in this case I applied Motion Blur (Filter > Blur > Motion Blur) which added to the illusion of depth in the scene.

**07 Particles and atmosphere:** To generate particles and give the impression of atmospheric perspective, I separated and isolated different elements of the composition using the Selection tool. Then with a soft brush I carefully added some tiny particles to these areas. By making use of this method I was able to control specific areas of the concept and focus on the points of interest. ▶

**05 Adding interesting objects and extra details brings the composition together**

**06 Manipulating the color is a very important element of designing a believable environment**

**07 It is important suggest an atmosphere if you want the viewer to believe the scene**



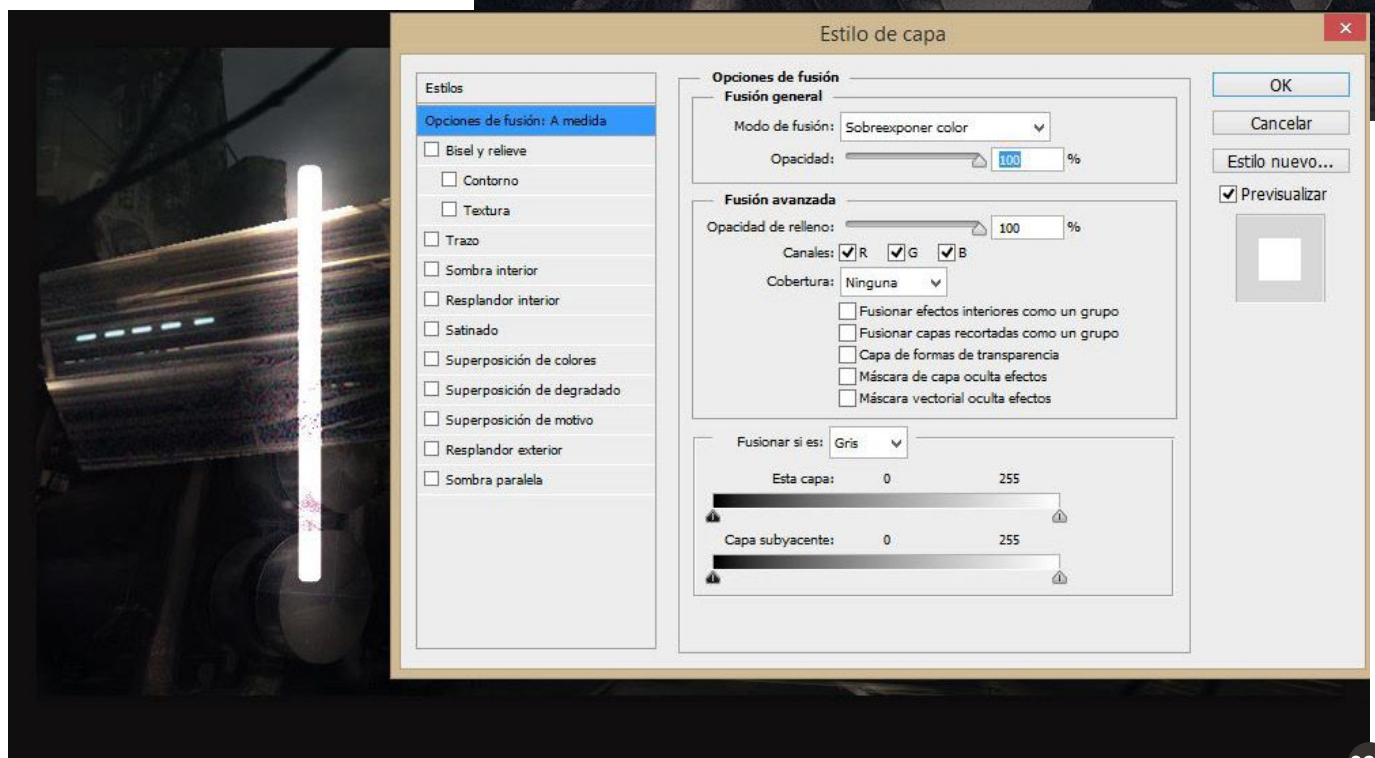


**08 Lighting:** At this stage I wanted to add some lights on the main structure so I simply drew some lines with a round brush and created a new layer above it set to Color Dodge blending mode (Layer > Layer Styles > Blending Options then use drop-down box to select Color Dodge) which overexposes the selection making it much lighter. I wanted to create areas of interest without losing any important information from the composition.

**09 Final render:** This is the last and most important part of the whole process. This is where I did some final color correction, and applied some noise to give more texture to the whole scene. Finally, I added some smoke particles and a few other effects to add to the realism of the final render. ●

**08** Using different blending modes is useful for adding areas of interest to your image

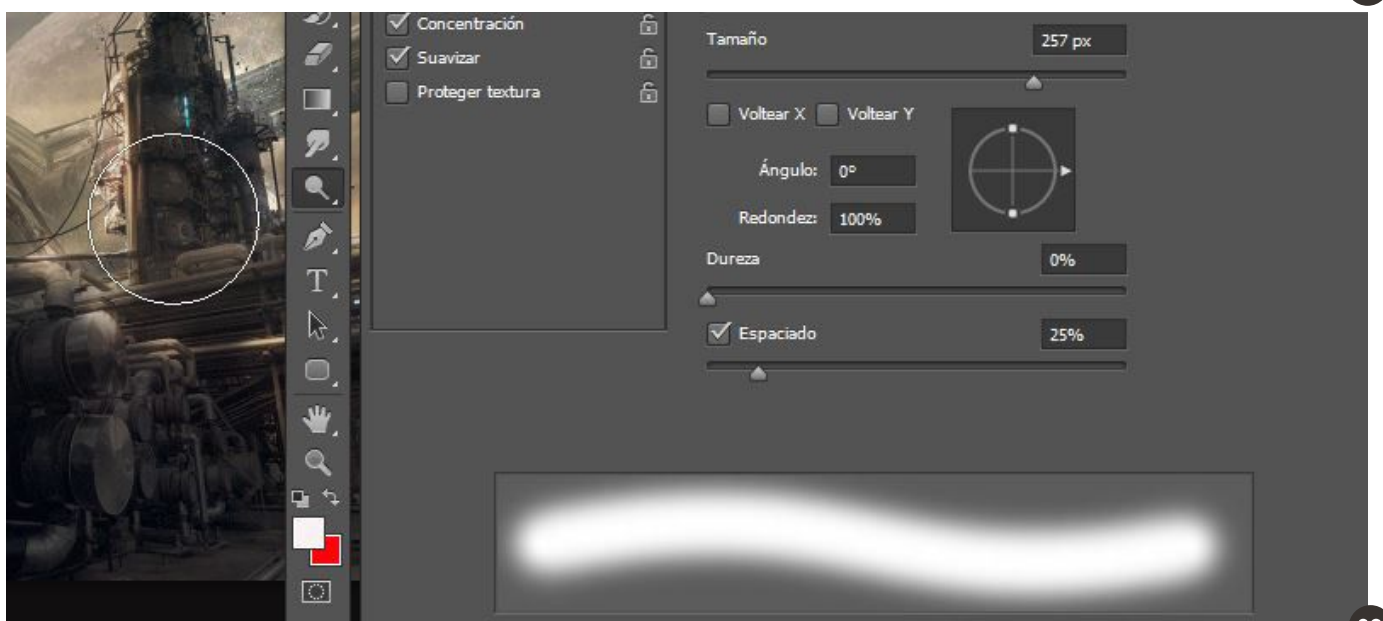
**09** Adding a few little effects helps to bring the composition together and give it a cinematic feel





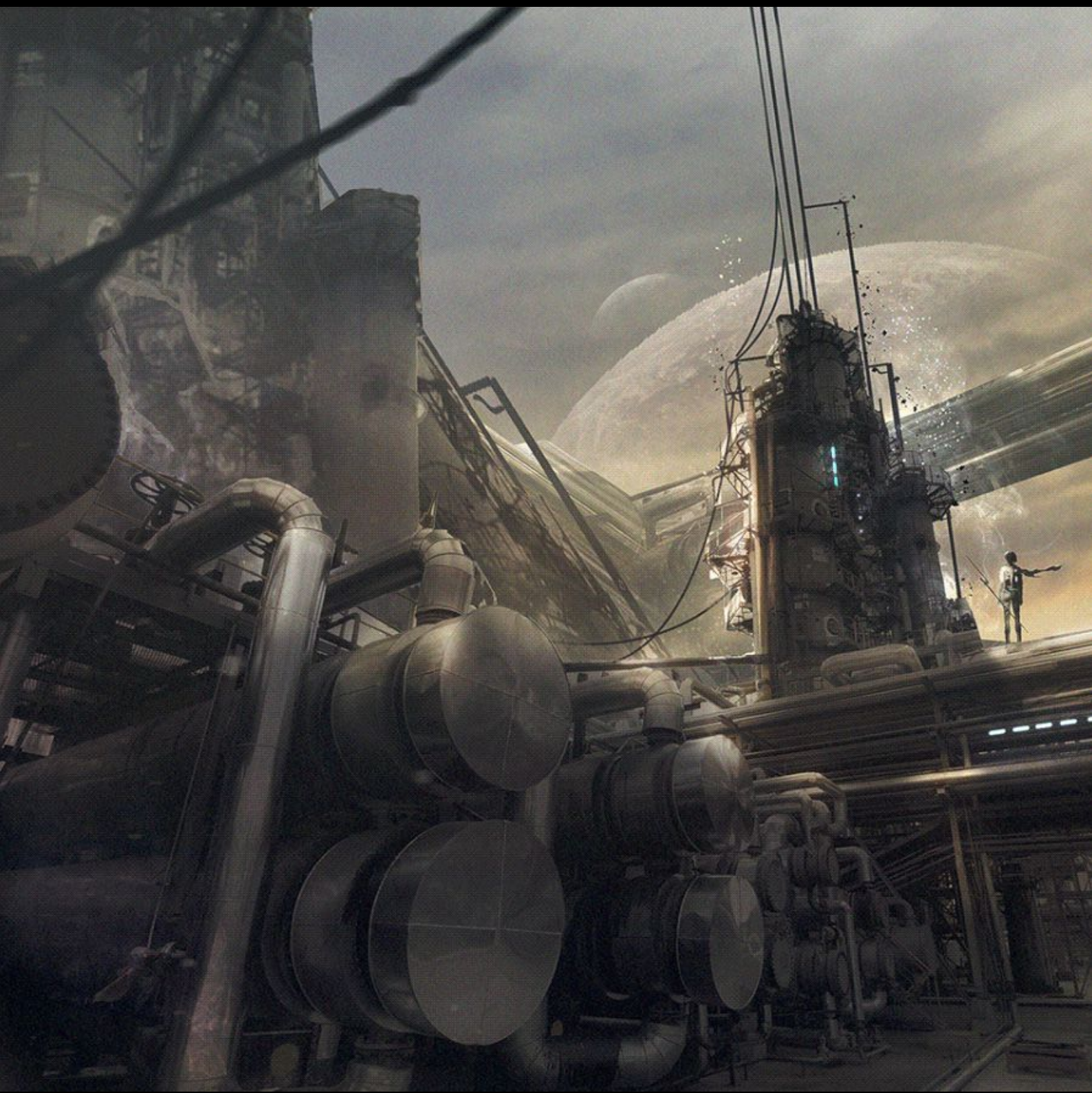


08a



09







## The Artist

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**José Julián Londoño  
Calle**

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Discover how freelance illustrator Gediminas Pranckevicius created his homage to his grandparent's pig in the illustration *Gourmand* ▶

All images © Gediminas Pranckevicius





## The Artist



**Gediminas Pranckevicius**

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**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Gediminas Pranckevicius is a freelance creative illustrator, working and living in Vilnius, Lithuania. He studied at Vilnius Academy of Arts. His work involves picture book illustration, music album cover illustration, character design, and illustration for advertising.



Once upon a time when I still was a little kid I used to visit my grandparents from time to time, and while I was there I used to love watching the pigs. On one occasion, one of those swine jumped, grabbed my hat and mashed it in the dirt. I immediately ran to the garden crying, dug up a beetroot, sliced it in two and placed a stone within it. Then I returned and gave that beetroot to the pig that stole my hat. The next day that pig

was butchered. I dedicate this picture to the unlucky pig.

#### Early sketches

My goal here was to study the material qualities of human skin. It is believed pigs are very similar to humans in terms of their biological structure; hence I made this sketch then made the following version. In order to make the pig's pose more dynamic and not so much of a passport photo, I

Painted it in such a way that there would be no symmetry, combining straight lines that intersect with bent ones.

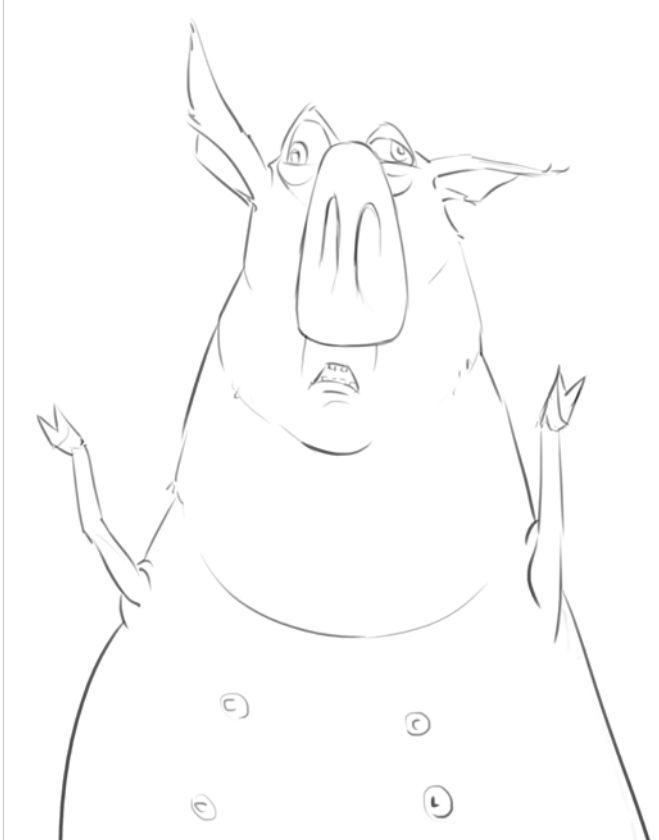
#### Lighting

Sometimes it is a good idea to think about lighting in advance, even though I tend to change it subconsciously while the work progresses – just because some of the details look better in different lighting.

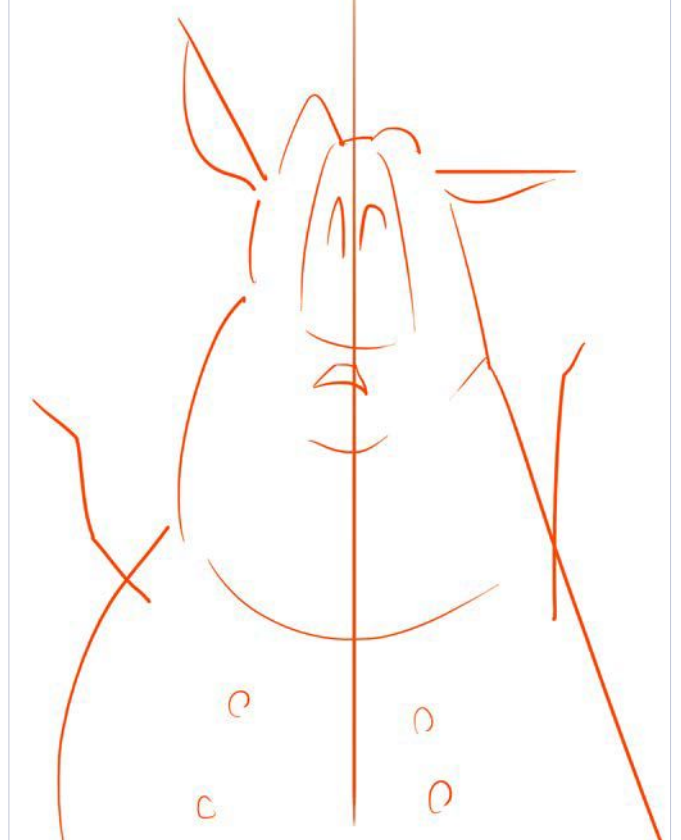
#### Quick early sketches



#### Another version of an early sketch I did



#### Adding asymmetry to making the image more interesting





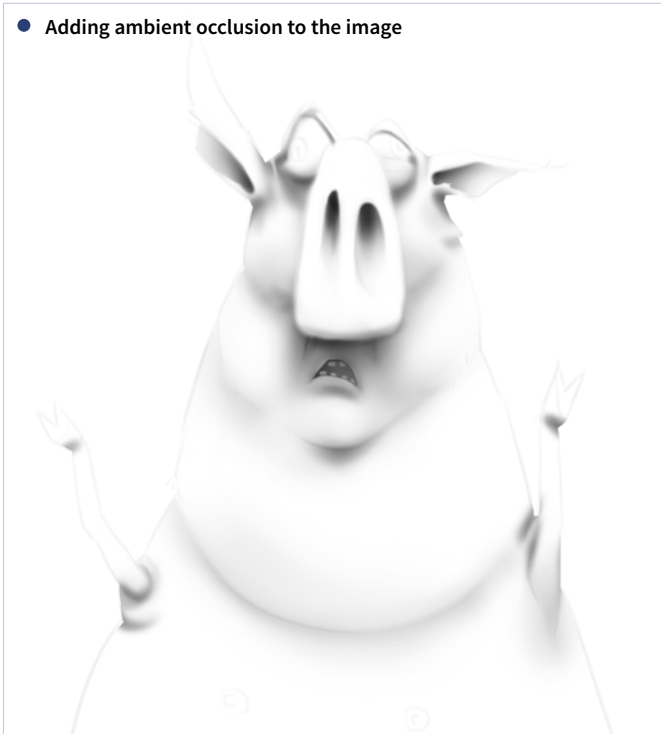
- I like to plan ahead with my lighting



- I add lighting elements early in the image process



- Adding ambient occlusion to the image



- I like to step away from the image once I have reached this stage



Afterwards of course you look at your painting and can't understand what's wrong with it.

So I envisioned that direct sunlight was flowing from the left through the open window, with a sky light illuminating from the right and some reflective lights beneath. My favorite part of the painting process is working on different small

details, hence I leave it to the very end – I start with the overall look of the image first.

#### **Adding shadows & taking a break**

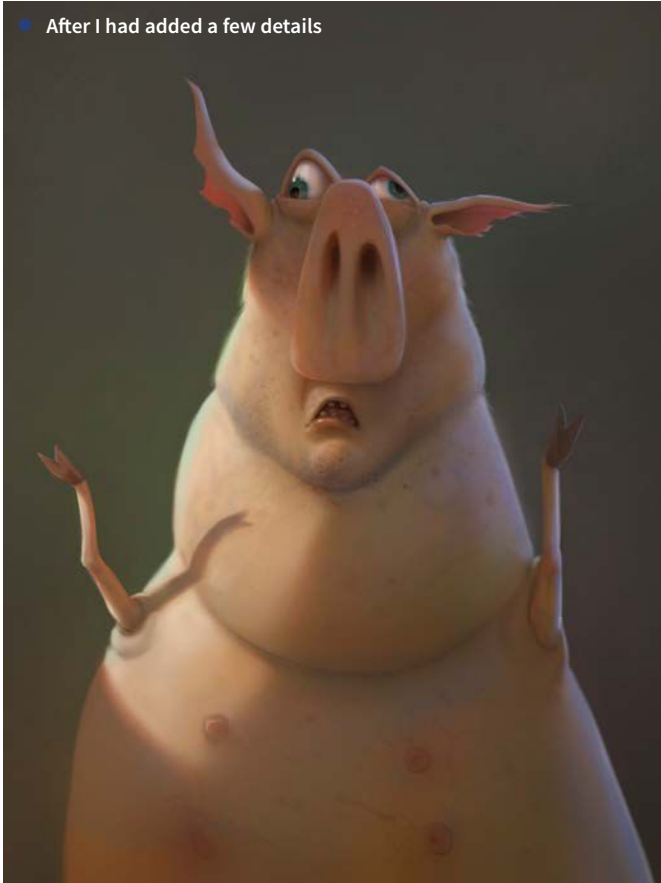
I guess Papa Carlo did not start carving his Pinocchio from the eyes. So after all the main lighting was rendered I created a new layer and painted the ambient occlusion shadows. As the

image progressed I changed its opacity multiple times – it was also very handy to apply layer masks to it.

When we have achieved this kind of general progress it is time to save it and go make some coffee, or relax in whatever way you prefer. Did you know that if you're sitting all the time, not ►



- After I had added a few details



- I roughly sketched this to see where skin blemishes could be



only do regular muscles start to atrophy but also the most important muscle in our bodies – the heart! Those who are not moving at all, please go for a walk for at least half an hour.

### Details

Now for the more pleasing, more interesting step. I started playing with nuances; started immersing myself in an endless world of details. While painting skin, it is important not to forget about all the goodies that hide underneath it – spots, threads, veins, fats, sharp bones and so on.

Maybe you can't find these things on normal people's skin; maybe only on bums and tramps – but anyway it makes the material qualities of the skin more convincing and interesting.

### Final touches

Translucent blood is visible in the areas where flesh is more transparent, for example; the nose, fingers or ears. This is the so-called effect of subsurface scattering. I added bluish, grayish areas where the beard may be freshly shaven and more pale areas are where bone was more exposed – just like on a human forehead for example. Last but not the least there were barely visible baby hairs, for which I made a special brush.

### Explore ideas

Little by little, by keeping in mind the lighting and all the small characteristics, and mostly using the round soft brush in Photoshop, my pig was finally completed. If I could improve it I might have spent more time on trying to get an illusion of wetness, but I might just explore that in my following pieces. ●

- These were the hairs painted for the pig

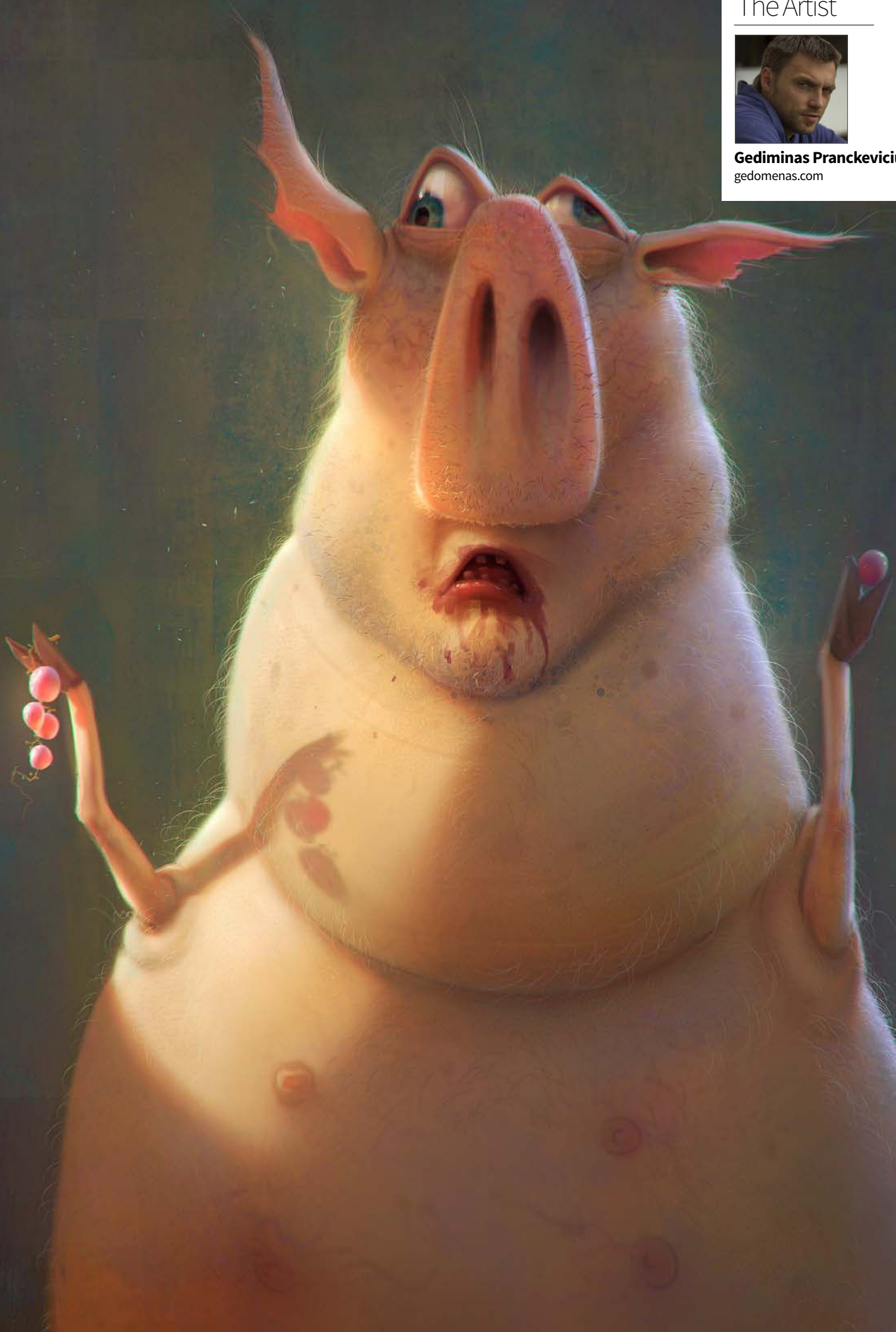




## The Artist



**Gediminas Prancevicius**  
gedomenas.com





The background of the entire image is a dramatic, dark landscape. At the bottom, a figure stands on a dark, rocky peak, looking up towards a bright, glowing light source in the sky. The sky is filled with dark, swirling clouds, and a bright, golden light emanates from the top right, creating a strong contrast with the dark surroundings. The overall mood is epic and awe-inspiring.

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